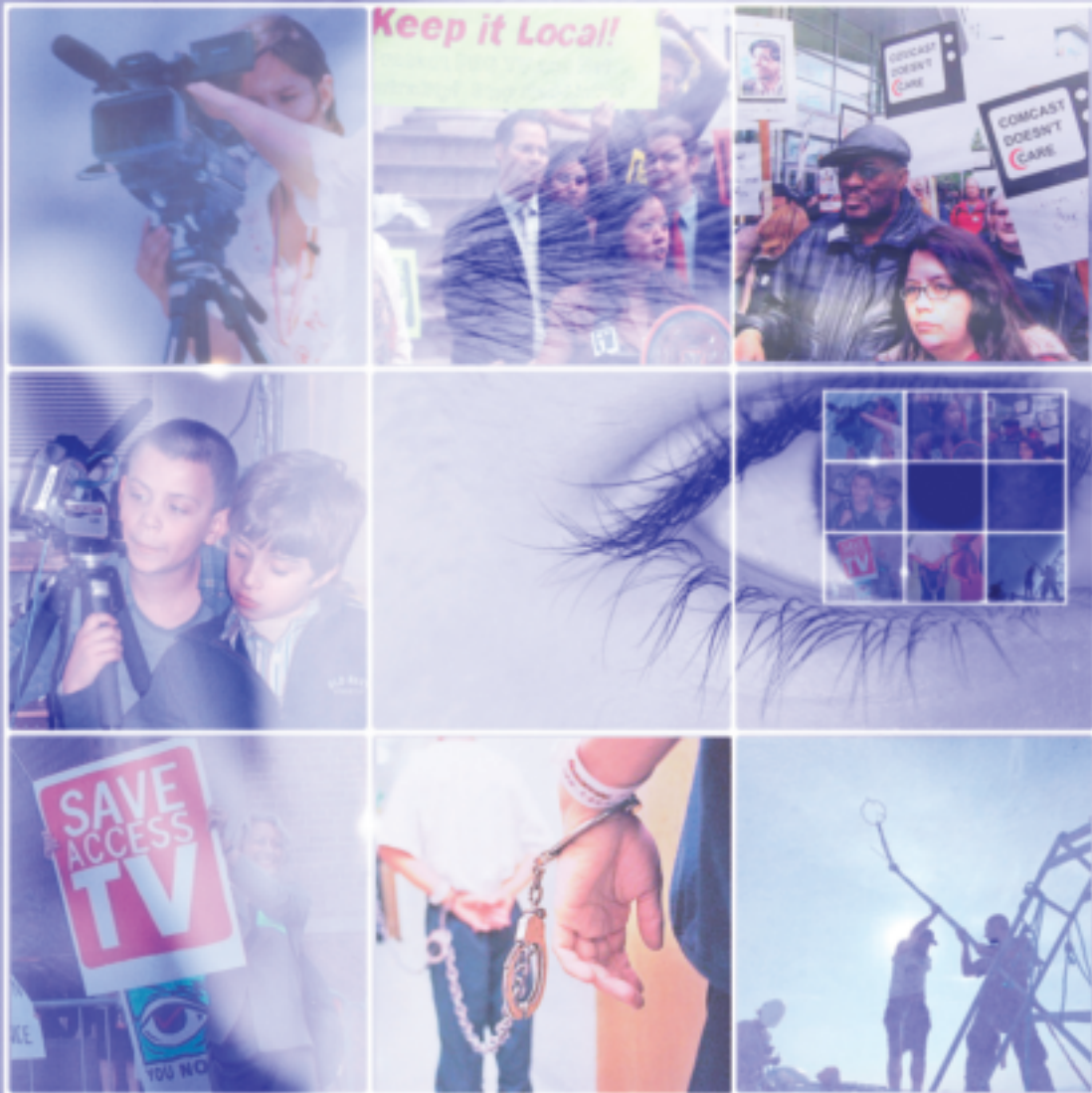


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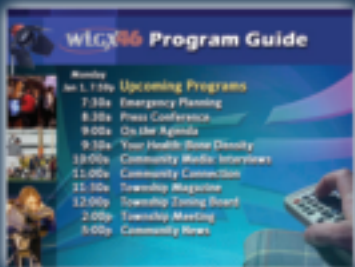


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Volume 30, Number 2

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Not Just Us

by *Anthony Riddle*

WE ARE BETTER WHEN WE ARE JUST.

Of course, we are better people when we are just people, fair to others.

But we are also better off when we are just. A just society is one in which all people have the opportunity to develop and share their potentials. We sometimes have less when we keep more to ourselves because we lose the gifts which others are not allowed to share.

This issue of CMR is one of which we should all be very proud. When purified to its essence, our thirty-plus years of work in PEG and in our communities can be described as media justice. There will be many variations here on just how one reaches a just media environment – as many as there are activists and communities. But there are two basic forms media justice takes:

1. The use of media content to address unjust situations.
2. The fair distribution of media controlled by the community and its use in systems that are democratic and responsive to community need.

In both of these, our centers are the model toward which the institutions of our society should strive.

We should not be surprised that our work occasionally grates on someone's sensibilities, even our own. How could it not when projected in contrast to the wildly unbalanced mainstream media efforts to colonize every moment of our waking lives and dreams for profit and control?

We may have to argue from time to time, as any muscularly fit community must, about what it takes to be just. What we cannot avoid, though, is that justice requires the correction, not just the reflection, of injustice.

I am so proud that the Alliance can be associated with such luminary, dedicated, visionary media justice advocates as guest editor Betty Yu and her magnificent assembly of contributors. Roll up your Dockers™ and wade in.

Justice, Mercy and Peace to those who struggle. **CMR**



Anthony Riddle is the executive director of the Alliance for Community Media.

Anthony can be reached at raiseeveryvoice@yahoo.com



A coalition of access centers, community organizations, activists and producers hold a press conference to save public access television in New York

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Take Me to Your Leader

by Mike Wassenaar

FRIENDS TELL ME I am a metaphor profligate: I'll try to cram an analogy or metaphorical allusion into just about any conversation. It's something I have always loved, and I think it has to do with the way my brain works. But it also helps me concretize concepts and complex processes. You know, like a road map.

So, working in our field, I invariably have conversations with people who ask me, "What's community television – or community radio, or community media?" And the metaphors pop up:

It's a mirror, reflecting the concerns, hopes and fears of the people in a locality, or a community of interest.

No, it's a trumpet, amplifying the voice of people fighting to be heard.

No, it's a soapbox in the public square (two metaphors in one!), allowing differing political and religious viewpoints to be expressed.

Then again, maybe it's a conduit, connecting – and we hope comforting – people who live in an increasingly alienating world.

So, if we want to mix the metaphors, community media is a shiny noise-maker you can step on out in the open with tubes (but it's not a dump truck ... apologies to Ted Stevens).

More and more, I'm not thinking about inanimate objects when I talk about community media. Instead, I envision community media as community leader: organizations and individuals who make a difference in the future path their city or township takes, and who are indispensable to the health of government and the independent sector in the United States.

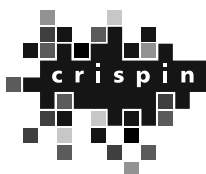
That's the vision I have as I read this edition of *Community Media Review*. As you think about the stories put forward here, think about the role your community media center plays in your town or village. Or about the impact you can have on the work of nonprofits in your community, on the educational achievement level of all people in your area, or on the understanding we have for one another in our complexified, media-ted society.

And become a leader. **cMr**



Mike Wassenaar is the executive director of Saint Paul Neighborhood Network, and is the chair of the national board of the Alliance for Community Media.

Mike can be reached at wassenaar@spnn.org



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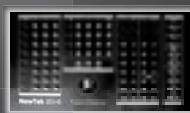
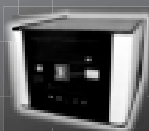
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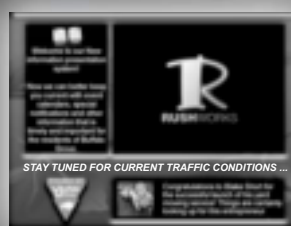
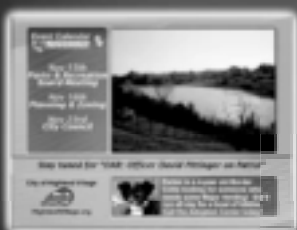


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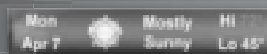
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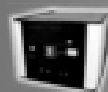
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Social Justice Media: By, For, and About Our Communities

by Betty Yu

MY JOURNEY into community media and social justice work began as a child to immigrant working parents. My parents, like tens of thousands of Chinese immigrant workers, toiled long hours earning sub-minimum wages in the sweatshop economy. In Chinatown, the local media is owned and controlled by a corrupt elite of organized crime families, sweatshop bosses, bankers and real estate developers, which serves to repress and shut out the voices of the Chinese immigrant community. The larger corporate media also ignores everyday people in my community, as well as people in other low-income immigrant communities, and people of color. In the mid-90s, it was infuriating to see a rising tide of workers organizing and fighting back, only to be ignored by the media. I began to see how important it is to have media tools to expose social injustice in our country.

One way to address this problem is to connect social justice communities with the resources and tools to create and control their own media. Today in New York, for example, the Chinese Staff and Workers' Association produces a public access TV program that is led and run by Chinese immigrant workers documenting their own lives and struggles fighting for economic and social justice.

We are at a critical juncture in the community media movement. Statewide franchise legislation threatens to limit or eliminate public, educational, and government access. At the same time, the development of new digital technologies has made creative expression and the distribution of ideas easier than ever before in human history. The potential for people, particularly those hardest hit by social injustice – low-income workers, immigrants, people of color, women, youth and the disabled – to use these technologies in the service of social change is growing.

For the access movement to preserve and expand its resources, we must position public access within a larger context of social change and media justice movements. Public Access media tools are just a means, not an end

“Whether we use television access channels or new digital platforms, we should strive to advance media justice and social change.”

goal. Whether we use television access channels or new digital platforms, we should strive to advance media justice and social change. For public access to be real, it must provide access specifically to those communities that are traditionally disenfranchised and underrepresented. It gives me great pride to present examples in this issue

of how media visionaries in places from New York City's Chinatown to Caracas, Venezuela are building a media movement by, for, and about our local communities.

I want to acknowledge Cynthia Carrion from MNN's Youth Channel for all her work in pulling together the youth media related articles. Also, I want to thank my partner, John C. Antush, for all his feedback and suggestions for this issue. **cMr**

Betty Yu is a community outreach and media specialist at Manhattan Neighborhood Network (MNN). In that position, she provides media making tools and resources to community-based organizations through video production training and a community media grants program.

Betty is a longtime community-based media maker, educator and organizer. Most recently, she has been one of the lead organizers in the Save Public Access TV campaign in New York, organizing individuals and organizations around legislation that can threaten community access TV. She is also on the board of Working Films, a national organization that links independent documentary filmmaking with community education, organizing, and direct action; on the board of directors and community funding board of the North Star Fund, a progressive foundation that supports organizations doing grassroots social justice movement building work; and on the board of Chinese Staff and Workers' Association (CSWA), a center organizing Chinese immigrant workers to fight sweatshop conditions in New York City's Chinatown.

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Section I. Media Justice as a Framework

Media Justice: Transforming Media to Build a Movement

by *Malkia A. Cyril*



Malkia Cyril is director of the Youth Media Council based in Oakland, CA.

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“Media justice is a framework for media change that seeks to expose the structural racism and class oppression in our media system and create media policy, content, and ownership that is fair and accountable to all people.”

SOME SAY that oppressed people don’t have a clear stake in media reform. But as a leader in the movement for media justice, the Youth Media Council knows nothing could be further from the truth. The double bind of opportunity and threat that corporate media creates for these communities is a life and death issue that social movements dedicated to the elimination of structural racism and class oppression must confront directly and transform strategically.

The Youth Media Council prescribes an affirmative change model called “media justice” with three critical components to engage oppressed communities in the fight to transform media.

The U.S. media was born of colonial conquest and imperial intrusion within the context of a white power government, and helps to maintain current inequities. Any movement for a participatory and accountable media system must be clearly in the service of a broad vision for racial, economic, and gender justice. Media activists must develop a cross-sector approach to transforming our media system and connect media change to racial justice and youth rights. The democratic foundations of this press are a myth that must be directly challenged by any movement to transform it. For people of color, women, queer people, and young folks, there has never been a free press, and without structural change toward a broad vision, there never will be.

The second component is a change model that engages historically disenfranchised communities in collective direct action for communication rights and structural media change. Individual action like lobbying, legal strategies, and e-activism have an important role to play but are insufficient to address the core

structural issues that maintain the inequities in our current media system. Corporate media is a free-market system bound to the structure of capital and chained to the mechanisms of racist power that organize our society today. Structural change can only come about through the combination of grassroots base-building, regional organizing, and a front line of coordinated media activism. A front line of media activists who represent the most privileged class alone will never be powerful enough to do more than stave off the corporate lobby. Through a more participatory and comprehensive approach, we can use content battles, access fights, and accountability campaigns to engage new constituencies in the fight for progressive media policy. We must build the grassroots lobby and demand that our local politicians do what the FCC refuses to do – hold our media system accountable to the public.

The third and final component critical to bringing about change is the media leadership of those whose citizenship is abridged. The U.S. media system isn’t called the fourth estate by accident. It is a powerful influencer of public will and determinant of public engagement. Those who face the greatest challenges to accessing their human and civil rights must lead the fight for the communication rights and public media ownership that could lead to their re-enfranchisement.

When contextualized within a broad vision and connected to bread and butter issues, media change becomes a widely and deeply felt issue. If we want to bring about real change to our media system, the media reform movement must adopt a vision, change model, and the leadership to build a national and international movement for media justice.

Media justice framework

Media justice is a framework for media change that seeks to expose the structural racism and class oppression in our media system and create media policy, content, and ownership that is fair and accountable to all people. Media justice sees media policy as a critical landscape for the struggle to transform media – but not the only one. Creating the environment for a thriving independent media requires media policy change – but it also demands the birth and development of an alternative media system in which all our communities have the resources to engage as media producers, owners, regulators, and audiences. To accomplish this we must organize regionally, develop marginalized communities as media activists and leaders, and build an expansive movement for communication

rights and public media ownership.

From the criminalizing of immigrants after 9/11, to the criminalizing of African-Americans in the wake of Hurricane Katrina, we have all been witness to the destructive and powerful force of a biased and unaccountable corporate media. By moving beyond reform alone to media justice, we can reclaim our cultural rights, build our media power, and determine our own destinies.

Marginalized communities are stakeholders, leaders, and visionaries in the fight for a free press because our freedom depends upon it and we are sure damn going to fight for it. **cMr**

“From the criminalizing of immigrants after 9/11, to the criminalizing of African-Americans in the wake of Hurricane Katrina, we have all been witness to the destructive and powerful force of a biased and unaccountable corporate media.”

Another Media Is Possible: Grassroots Media Activism Organizes For Power

by **Jonathan Lawson**

“As the founding fathers were documenting their concept of a free press, they were also building a slaveholding capitalist economy and a white nationalist politic that would entrench media policies and practices for centuries to come. Our current media system reproduces and maintains the colonial power relationships of its beginnings. Understanding the role media plays in creating and perpetuating structural racism and class oppression is not a secondary issue – it is essential to building an effective movement for media reform that fundamentally transforms the U.S. system of communications.”

~ Malkia Cyril

AMONG THE INTRODUCTORY speakers at the 2005 National Conference on Media Reform in St. Louis, Youth Media Council (YMC) director Malkia Cyril took the broadest view of what was needed – a radical reevaluation of the media reform movement’s focus on federal policy victories, and even of the canonical freedom-of-the-press principles codified by Jefferson and Hamilton. (Cyril brought the crowd to its feet, by the way, in one of the conference’s few standing ovations; other recipients were hip-hop journalist Davey D and closing speaker Bill Moyers.)

Back home in Oakland, the YMC spends more energy on smaller-scale local work to improve our damaged media democracy. The group’s primary audience is young people, particularly young people of color, in the richly diverse San Francisco Bay Area. While the organization works on media issues with broad national implications, its primary accountability is to the communities in which it organizes. Its media work emerges from the particular concerns of those communities, including youth incarceration, the criminalization of dissent, and immigrants’ rights.



Jonathan Lawson is executive director of Reclaim the Media, based in Seattle. He also directs online communications for Service Employees International Union (SEIU) 775, and sits on the advisory board for the Consumers Union’s *Hear Us Now* project. He has worked in community radio since 1986 and currently co-hosts the weekly creative music program *Flotation Device* on KBCS in Seattle. His articles on media politics have appeared in *Adbusters*, *YES!*, *Clamor*, *Z Magazine*, and other publications.

Jonathan can be reached at jonathan@reclaimthemedias.org

Media Justice Fund

The Media Justice Fund (MJF), part of the Funding Exchange National Network, makes local and regional media justice grants. The MJF supports leadership development among people of color, low-income people, LGBT and youth. They work within marginalized communities to organize around media and communication technologies to effect media accountability and policy change.

Check out MJF's new journal, *Imagining the (UN)Thinkable: Community Media Over the Next Five Years*, which explores the changing landscape of community media.

For more information about MJF, or to get a copy of its latest publication, visit www.fex.org/mjf

Useful Links

Media Action Grassroots Network (MAG-Net)

www.mediagrassroots.net

MAG-Net leadership team organizations:

- **Esperanza Peace and Justice Center**
www.esperanzacenter.org
- **Media Alliance**
www.media-alliance.org
- **Media Tank**
www.mediatank.org
- **Reclaim the Media**
www.reclaimthemedial.org
- **Texas Media Empowerment Project**
www.texasmep.org
- **Youth Media Council**
youthmediacouncil.org

A local radio accountability campaign, organized by the YMC, Media Alliance and other Bay Area organizations, showed the strengths of grassroots media activism. The Oakland-based Clear Channel station KMEL, though calling itself “the People’s Station,” was baldly contemptuous toward community needs for local news, culture and political discussions. Identifying KMEL’s corporate ownership and profit demands as the cause for the station’s indifference to community needs, the grassroots groups helped youth activists learn to monitor and assess coverage of a controversial policing bill. The campaign effectively publicized its findings of bias with theatrical demonstrations and through sympathetic newspaper coverage. Under pressure from the community, station management finally agreed to air a program featuring local youth voices.

Many small organizations working for social change through media activism have developed an approach similar to the one described here – harnessing locally-grounded grassroots organizing and community knowledge to challenge oppressive media structures or behaviors. While their targets are often federal policies or major corporations, these groups’ campaigns are animated by universal concerns about social and economic justice. Grassroots media activist groups are often deeply collaborative – with other local or regional activist organizations and community groups, with public access centers and community radio stations, and so forth. These collaborative relationships give grassroots media groups high-quality sources of knowledge that national or D.C.-based advocacy groups may overlook.

MAG-Net

Several prominent grassroots organizations, hoping to increase the diversity of voices within the overall media democracy movement, recently launched a new coalition: the Media Action Grassroots Network (MAG-Net). MAG-Net seeks to strengthen the leadership, strategy and coordination of the grassroots sector of the media reform movement. Planned activities include regional organizing and

strategic gatherings, support for various ongoing collaborations among member groups, and other field-building work. The YMC and Media Alliance are co-coordinators of MAG-Net. Other founding groups include the Esperanza Peace and Justice Center (San Antonio), Media Tank (Philadelphia), Reclaim the Media (Seattle), and the Texas Media Empowerment Project (San Antonio).

These groups have all become regional and national leaders in creative organizing around a range of media democracy issues, including media ownership, cable regulation, municipal broadband, media literacy training, community media and media monitoring. Over the last several years, each of the groups has organized community testimony for the FCC hearings on media ownership and localism, and several of the groups worked together in 2005 and 2006 as the Grassroots Cable Coalition, helping each other organize community campaigns around public access and other cable franchise issues. The Texas Media Empowerment Project (MEP) is currently mobilizing communities to protect public access throughout Texas.

The MAG-Net groups have also built deep collaborations with a broad range of other media activist and social change groups. The Center for International Media Action, the Movement Strategy Center, the SPIN Project and Prometheus Radio Project all played roles in helping the new coalition come together. MAG-Net member groups also work closely with the Alliance for Community Media, Free Press and other national organizations, as well as with groups in their own backyards.

For the Esperanza Peace and Justice Center, involvement in current media policy battles is self-defense, as well as work on behalf of communities the group regularly works with, including immigrants, lesbians and gay men, and political artists. The group, which as an arts and culture organization receives some public funding from the City of San Antonio, has repeatedly come under vicious attack from commentators in the city’s conservative mainstream media, including local Clear Channel radio and the lo-

cal newspapers. Stirring up opposition to an Esperanza-sponsored lesbian and gay film festival, the group's attackers succeeded in pressuring the city to pull Esperanza's funding. The Esperanza Peace and Justice Center successfully argued in court that the defunding had been unlawfully political, and the whole experience helped awaken Esperanza and its communities to the problem of concentrated, unaccountable media – and to see that media policy is a primary battleground for social justice activism.

Media Justice

Where the MAG-Net groups come together most strongly is on the level of social justice values, in particular, rallying around the idea of media justice – an organizing framework which first emerged from a Fall 2002 media activist gathering at Tennessee's Highlander Research and Education Center. Among the various, often imprecise, phrases used to characterize media-critical activism ("media reform," "media democracy," "cultural environment," etc.), "media justice" places media activism in the service of broader social change goals, and specifically in the service of oppressed and marginalized communities.

Media justice is a framework for understanding and responding to media systems whose content and structures help enforce inequality within a racist, patriarchal, capitalist society. A media justice critique asks: Where is the media that holds government and corporate power accountable? Where are the voices that fight racism, sexism and homophobia, rather than amplifying them? Where are the diverse voices of our own communities, our elders and young people? Where is the media that promotes community engagement, respect, and generosity, instead of commercialism, consumption and competition?

Having a place to prioritize, discuss, and strategize around these questions has been a key benefit of the MAG-Net collaboration to date – a conversation the founding groups are looking forward to sharing with other organizations. "Media Justice has given us a framework to

be more creative in our approach to the programs we do," explains Media Tank executive director Inja Coates. "It's led us to integrate more of an organizing component into our work, in addition to education and mobilization."

Fan the flames

"We're raising the visibility of grassroots groups within the overall media reform sector," says Coates, "and that means strategically figuring out how to shift the values." MAG-Net organizers aim both to increase the profile of media justice critiques within media reform conversations, and to expand the capacity for media activism within the broader social justice movement. After introducing itself to the media reform community at January's 2007 National Conference on Media Reform in Memphis, MAG-Net made a bigger public splash in Atlanta this summer, distributing hundreds of hand fans marked "fan the flames of media justice" to overheated delegates at the first United States Social Forum.

At the Social Forum, MAG-Net also introduced a ten-point platform for media change, calling for community-accountable media content, universal access to communications technology and media production tools, increased public ownership of media resources, and just enforcement of media regulations in the public interest. The platform also calls for the long-term development of a "community-centered" media policy, and an expansive redefinition of free speech rights, starting from a perspective of communication as a universal human right (www.mediagrassroots.net/ten-point-platform.html).

Over the next two years, MAG-Net plans to expand its network to include dozens of groups, with the six founding organizations constituting a "leadership



Oakland youth protest corporate hate radio

Photo courtesy Youth Media Council

“Among the various, often imprecise, phrases used to characterize media-critical activism (“media reform,” “media democracy,” “cultural environment,” etc.), “media justice” places media activism in the service of broader social change goals, and specifically in the service of oppressed and marginalized communities.”



MAG-Net groups have organized campaigns targeting Comcast in Philadelphia, Seattle and San Francisco (pictured)

team.” The expanded network will likely include more media and cultural activist organizations and independent media groups in southern states and other areas where it is typically difficult to organize and fund grassroots social change activism. The network’s ultimate vision pushes beyond reform: building a social movement

behind media that helps distribute power among all people. “For now, it may make sense to think about media justice as a segment of the media reform movement,” reflects Jeff Perlstein of Media Alliance. “From a media justice perspective, it’s really the other way around.” **cMr**

Case Study in Media Justice: Internet 4 Everyone Campaign

Though often touted as one of the most wired cities in the United States, there is a significant digital divide in San Francisco today – as there is in most cities and rural areas of the United States. A recent study found that in San Francisco:

- One in three residents lacks computer or internet access at home.
- Half of the people of color in the city lack internet access at home.
- San Francisco ranks last in classrooms with internet and computer access per 100 students among major California cities.

(Source: *The Digital Divide in San Francisco*, by Andre Chan, UC Berkeley, 2007)

Municipal broadband initiatives can provide a powerful opportunity for cities and towns to sidestep the massive telecommunications duopoly of Big Phone and Big Cable, and move us closer to bridging the digital divide by ensuring universal, affordable and robust high-speed internet access for all our residents. For rural and urban communities that have been underserved or redlined by the telcos, a municipal approach – whether using wireless or fiber optic infrastructure – may be the only hope for creating such access and fostering greater media justice.

While less expensive internet access may be a step forward in most locales, alone it is not enough to generate meaningful participation by the currently underserved. Also needed are the other elements of what we call “digital inclusion”: affordable computers, training, tech support and culturally relevant content. Without committed funding streams for staffing and implementation of digital inclusion programs, municipal broadband projects are as likely to deepen the digital divide as to bridge it. Unfortunately, most cities have ignored these crucial elements, effectively reinforcing the broadband status quo.

Media Alliance’s Internet 4 Everyone campaign to create a municipal broadband system in San Francisco was sparked directly by our multi-year cable franchise renewal organizing project from 2001 – 2005. Twenty-five community-based organizations mobilized their members to secure strong public interest provisions in the Comcast renewal. Of these, six key partner organizations followed up to explore how our city government could (1) create more accountable and robust media infrastructure for its underserved constituents that still face redlining and the digital divide and, (2) fund digital inclusion to realize the promise of this city project.

Now in its second year, the campaign is focused on strengthening community-driven, public interest and consumer advocacy in the 14-plus municipal broadband projects in motion in California. We are documenting and sharing lessons learned from the San Francisco work with allies across the state to leverage our experience for maximum impact via regional convenings, an advocate’s toolkit, and a listserv for information and strategy sharing.

We’re also ramping up this work across the Bay, in Oakland, where the digital divide is much more severe than in San Francisco. Already we’ve convened numerous community meetings which built momentum for Mayor Dellums’ recent signing of a commitment to end the digital divide in the city within five years. Our upcoming Digital Inclusion Summit will map out the road forward that makes sense for Oakland’s unique situation.

This work is part and parcel of Media Alliance’s ongoing contributions to the field of media justice: to educate and unite a powerful coalition of media/tech workers, community-based organizations, and social justice activists to make their voices heard in media policy debates; to make access to the means of communication affordable and universal; and to amplify the news and views of communities underserved by media and telecommunications companies.

Jeff Perlstein
Media Alliance

Section II. Social Justice Through Media

Moving “Justice” into the Center of Community Media

by **Betty Yu**

THE OLD MYTH OF “one dollar, one vote” sounds increasingly hollow as control over the economy, including the media, continues to become concentrated in fewer and fewer hands. Where is democracy in choosing among brands of ideas and sources of information that are produced by a few corporations? While the internet does provide an unlimited “anything goes” forum for expression, its cacophony of endless voices cannot supplant the hypnotic power of the centralized, mass media beamed into our homes that inevitably shapes our frameworks, perspectives, values, and the way we think as a society.

From its earliest days, public access television has fostered self-determination by putting the tools of television directly into the hands of local communities so that people can speak for themselves. Community access TV stations allow the public to take collective possession of some means of production – albeit on a small scale – and to create their own rules and dialogues, and shape their own thinking.

Community media centers (CMCs) make airtime and training available on a non-discriminatory, first-come, first-served basis. Mike Wassenaar, executive director of St. Paul Neighborhood Network, points out that, “Most community media centers have strong connections with local civic, nonprofit, and religious organizations – League of Women Voters, Rotary, Elks, churches, temples, mosques, etc. CMCs need to promote community-based groups and institutions and advocate for their betterment, to survive and flourish with future generations.”

Critics have observed that community access TV sometimes fails to win the participation of harder-hit communities, es-

pecially working people, people of color, immigrants, women, and the disabled. We must admit that the “first-come” rule does not address the fact that some communities face greater obstacles than others to participating. In response, some centers are engaging in targeted outreach to communities that are commonly excluded from the mainstream media and from alternative resources. Social justice organizations, through which hard-hit people are organizing and finding a voice, are often proving to be the natural partners in these efforts. In order to better serve these hard-hit communities and social justice groups, many of these centers are finding it necessary to go beyond just television to provide public access to a wide-range of media technology services.

Changing tides in community media

We must remember that the access TV resources we have today grew out of grassroots activism and hard-fought struggles for media access. By actively reaching out to disenfranchised communities that still lack access to media making tools, today’s CMCs are renewing the core principles of public access – media democracy and justice.

With the spread of new media technologies, CMCs have become part of the fabric of social justice organizing in local communities. They are becoming media hubs for communities to advance social change organizing, activism, advocacy and outreach work. According to Laurie Cirivello, executive director of Grand Rapids Community Media Center in Michigan, “We have to be willing to creatively leverage the tools in our trust to meet unique needs of community organizations. I think we do this by organizing ourselves as assistive organizations, focusing on the

Betty Yu is the guest editor of this issue. Her biographical information appears on page 13.

“By actively reaching out to disenfranchised communities that still lack access to media making tools, today’s CMCs are renewing the core principles of public access – media democracy and justice.”

outcome needs of those we serve. Then we figure out the most effective ways to leverage the tools we have, to help them be successful.”

At the same time that they are digging deeper into communities, in the last decade more community access TV centers have expanded their services in an effort

to sustain and increase their producer base and viewership. Centers are providing training and access to new digital tools for distribution, and creating unique platforms for organizations to advance their social movements through this medium of television. They are not only a source for access to cable television communications.

Case Studies: CMCs in Action With a Social Agenda

There are a growing number of forward-thinking visionaries at community media centers that are assertively seeking out partnerships with local community members and organizations working toward social and economic justice. Portland Community Media and Manhattan Neighborhood Network are two of the centers that are using unique and innovative media strategies for community building.

Portland Community Media and Southeast Uplift Neighborhood Program

Portland Community Media (PCM – www.pcmtv.org) in Oregon worked in partnership with the Southeast Uplift Neighborhood Program, a nonprofit coalition of 20 neighborhoods in southeast and northeast Portland, to help them use community media to advance their housing rights issues. In 2006, Southeast Uplift received a grant from the Bureau of Community and Housing Development to implement the year-long “Pathway Project: Public Awareness Transforming Homelessness in Portland.” Working with local homeless and housed community members, they produced the video *Transforming Homelessness in Portland: What Can You Do?* PCM also designed and implemented a custom media education program for Southeast Uplift staff and volunteers. In a series of classes, participants worked with p:ear – a local nonprofit arts program serving homeless youth and individuals – to produce a documentary. PCM hosted a community screening of the video, followed by a panel discussion with members from each of the three participating organizations. DVDs have been distributed to community organizations and classrooms, along with a guide entitled *Transforming Homelessness: What Works*. The video also aired on PCM’s public access channels.

Manhattan Neighborhood Network and Chinese Staff and Workers’ Association

Chinese Staff and Workers’ Association (CSWA), a center organizing immigrant workers to fight sweatshop conditions in the New York City area, produces a monthly program called *CSWA News: Voice of the*

Worker. This program reaches over 650,000 homes on Manhattan Neighborhood Network’s (MNN) public access TV channels, providing a working class alternative to the business-dominated Chinese newspapers. MNN helped develop CSWA’s intergenerational video project in which older restaurant and garment workers train side-by-side with youth. MNN’s unique Community Media Grant Program provided CSWA with financial resources for cameras and editing equipment. CSWA organizer Nancy Eng says, “Video has become a powerful organizing tool. Our TV programs show the public that workers in Chinatown are fighting back against sweatshop conditions here in New York City.” Recently, delivery workers at Saigon Grill restaurant launched a boycott and daily picket to protest the \$1.60 hourly wages. One of the workers, Yu Guan Ke, says, “Having video equipment at the picket line has helped us document things, like when the police gave us a hard time when we first started picketing.” Recently CSWA featured this boycott on its program, included videos on its blog (www.boycottsaigongrill.blogspot.com), and organized community screenings and discussions of the video throughout the city. MNN has also featured this video on its videoblog site (www.mnn-videoblog.blogspot.com).



Nancy Eng of Chinese Staff and Workers’ Association, and MNN community producer, interviews a restaurant worker on the picket line

Today's CMCs are multimedia community centers, training local communities in the use of the full range of media tactics that are now available due to "digital media convergence" such as videoblogging, podcasting, web design, digital storytelling, web streaming, social networking, internet-based radio production, DVD creation and distribution, community screenings, and on and offline video festivals. More importantly, CMCs are helping groups develop their own media capacity and strategies. In this way, community organizations will be able to realize the full potential offered by current technologies to help them expand their reach and project their social justice message. "We're changing our methodology. It's not about the quantity of community groups we work with," explains Denisse Andrade, community outreach and media specialist at Manhattan Neighborhood Network. "It's about fostering relationships with these groups, understanding who their audience is, what they are trying to say, and how it fits within the overall mission of the organization. Then we can help them find the best strategy for reaching that audience."

The emergence of CMCs and their efforts to reach out to those who are most in need of access to media tools is infusing the community media movement with new meaning and energy. These new visionaries are redefining what true access means and who centers should strive to serve. Their example presents a challenge to other centers to examine their own practice and to think about whether they are really fulfilling the mission of the community media movement. Are we actively seeking out partnerships with community organizations? Are we removing barriers to participation for disenfranchised communities? Are we providing enough support for everyone's voices to be heard through our access channels? What should our role as CMCs be in supporting social movements?

Within the current political climate, more and more social justice communities and activists are being silenced by the corporate media system. We must break down barriers to entry and provide the services,

tools and media strategies necessary for social change movements to communicate their message. As new challenges posed by legislation and new technologies come our way, the survival and expansion of community media centers depend on the support of the people of our local communities and grassroots organizations. If our centers truly serve the needs of the people in our communities, then the people will support public access TV and our community media centers. **CMR**

How Are CMCs Supporting Community-based Organizations?

"We have partnered with a community-based organization that does housing and financial literacy work in Minnesota's Latino communities to create *Mejorimientos*, a TV and DVD series that helps Spanish-speaking homeowners in Minnesota maintain their homes and maintain wealth in the community. The program is now being used to build knowledge and power in the Latino communities, and to protect consumers against scams and predatory lenders."

~ Mike Wassenaar
executive director,
St. Paul Neighborhood Network
www.spnn.org

"GRCMC is engaging powerful tools to help create stronger and more effective services for ex-offenders. We have pulled together various service providers to design a multimedia online center – The Re-entry Online Resource Center – that will help minimize the communication, training and job search issues experienced by those re-entering the community after prison."

~ Laurie Cirivello
executive director,
Grand Rapids Community Media Center
www.grcmc.org

"We partner with organizations like NARAL (a national organization advocating for and providing comprehensive information on reproductive rights) and Seattle National Organization for Women (NOW) who represent women's voices. SCAN recently produced a public service announcement (PSA) in English and Vietnamese about women's health issues and cervical cancer. We also partner with the American Civil Liberties Union. SCAN produces a monthly show for each of these partners, and we produce PSAs for community-based organizations."

~ Elise Child
outreach manager,
SCAN Community Media
www.scantv.org

Intergenerational Community Media Collaborations at Appalshop in Kentucky

by *Ginger Moored*



Ginger Moored came to Appalshop in June 2006 to coordinate a participatory evaluation of the Appalachian Media Institute and is currently working as AMI's outreach coordinator. She has previously worked with youth as a science teacher at a public high school in Washington, D.C., and holds masters degrees in public affairs and urban and regional planning from Princeton University.

Ginger can be reached at gingermoored@gmail.com

Excerpts of this article previously appeared in the Winter/Spring 2007 issue of *Community Works Journal*.

"I see the physical, emotional, and environmental effects of surface mining every day – wells sinking, foundations cracking, people moving, businesses leaving, and a decrease in the standard of living. I've learned, though, that if you don't say something about the issues, then nothing's going to get done. Nobody's going to do it for you. This taught me that you have to be a leader unto yourself."

~ Danielle Burke
Appalachian Media Institute
youth participant

IMAGINE LIVING IN AN AREA where half of the children live below the poverty line and one-third live with someone other than their two biological parents; a place where mining, a source of many area jobs, leaves mountains and men mutilated, makes water undrinkable, and fuels a prescription drug abuse epidemic. A good education is the ticket to a better job elsewhere, but half of the local high school's graduates don't enroll in college, and under 20 percent are deemed proficient in reading by standardized tests. To make things worse, the land that many families consider a part of their heritage is dug out right from under them, often by people who have never even taken a step on that same land.

Many people, when they envision this, see a place so exploited that its problems are bound to be chronic. But a group of eastern Kentucky youth saw an opportunity instead.

A few years ago, a group of youth participating in the Appalachian Media Institute (AMI) made a video documenting the destruction of nearby homes and wells from mine blasting. AMI is Appalshop's youth media program. Appalshop is an arts and education center based in the coalfields of eastern Kentucky. Appalshop's education and training programs support communities' efforts to solve their own problems in a just and equitable way.

The youth held a community screening of their video and followed that with a community discussion that quickly turned into a meeting about destructive mining practices. Rather than stop the conversation there, the youth organized a trip to the Of-

fice of Surface Mining in Frankfort, Kentucky where they questioned government officials about the permit that had been issued to their community that would irreversibly ruin their main water source. In the end, after a youth-organized rally, the Office of Surface Mining nullified the mining permit, saving the community's water supply from pollution that would make it undrinkable.

This was quite a feat, especially considering it takes years for organizations – even venerable ones like the Sierra Club, for instance – to make tangible, positive change. So how did this group of Appalachian Media Institute youth, who are from one of the poorest and most exploited areas of the country, pull this off? By mobilizing their most valuable resource, one that nobody can take away from them: multiple generations of central Appalachians.

It turns out that when the youth went to Kentucky's Office of Surface Mining, they were not alone. The youth had gathered forty students, community members, and activist artists to travel to Frankfort, and used their collective power to make the state government accountable for its harmful actions. Youth-adult alliances like these almost always strengthen movements to improve communities, and in central Appalachia, young people and adults have no choice but to work together. Young people help energize ongoing adult movements with new ideas, and adults mentor youth through the challenging process of understanding the systemic problems in their communities. This relationship is a central part of AMI's community-based

media production training process.

Mach, 19, is a former student of the AMI. When Mach joined AMI in 2003, he was losing interest in school; he thought peers and teachers were not listening to his ideas. Plus, he didn't see the point in going to school since local jobs were (and still are) practically limited to mining and working at Wal-mart. In a county where only 77 percent of youth graduate from high school and less than 8 percent of residents have a college degree, Mach's feelings were hardly unique. Eventually, he stopped going to school altogether.

At AMI, though, it was different. "What I really enjoyed about [AMI] is that I wasn't treated like a child," Mach explains. Instead, he was treated as a colleague by filmmakers such as Herb E. ("Herbie") Smith, who was one of the local youth who founded Appalshop in 1969. Today, Appalshop has grown to be a collective of 30 media artists whose work focuses on the traditions of Appalachia and the socio-economic, political, and environmental issues that affect the region's communities. In its 36 years of operation, Appalshop has created the largest single body of work about Appalachia through its film and video, radio, and theater wings. Meanwhile, Herbie has become a nationally-recognized filmmaker, producing documentaries such as *The Ralph Stanley Story*.

Mach says that Herbie taught him how to use lighting in films – how to soften the light, create larger shadows, use overhead lights – and that he would watch cuts of his films and offer advice. "But the part I remember most," Mach ecstatically tells me, "was when Herbie watched my film *Banjo Pickin' Girl*. After the screening, Herbie said he really liked the lighting in the film. Then he turned to me and said, 'How'd you do that?' I thought that was really cool." Affirming Herbie's skills as a film critic, the LocoMotion film festival presented *Banjo Pickin' Girl* with the Best Documentary award in 2005.

AMI interns actually have also begun a dialogue with their community about how to reduce teen drug abuse. But instead of a typed outline with bullet-points, this plan is based on two films made by AMI interns. It began last spring when a group of 12 local

high school students participated in AMI's Media Lab, an after-school program where youth learn the video production process and then make a documentary film about their community. The Media Lab curriculum started with Robert Salyer, Herbie, Mimi Pickering, and other Appalshop filmmakers, teaching the interns the basics of film: lighting, sound, recording, interviewing, editing. To see how these components fit together in a film, the students then watched Robert's film *Sludge* and Anne Lewis' and Mimi's *Fast Food Women*, among other Appalshop documentaries.

Then came the real work: creating their own documentary films. The youth decided to focus their films on prescription drug abuse.

"We knew this issue was a big problem," Mach explains. "We all knew people who were on prescription drugs ... our friends and family members. People we know and love and care about were dying."

The AMI interns worked in two groups: one that made a film about the connection between the lack of activities for youth and drug use, and another whose film explored how families are affected when a family member has a drug addiction. Addressing big issues like these was not easy, so the youth producers worked with the mostly-adult community partners UNITE, an anti-drug, community-based organization, and the Kentuckians for the Commonwealth, a citizens' justice coalition (KFTC). Through UNITE and KFTC, the youth set up interviews with former drug addicts, the head of the local Narcotics Anonymous, a psychiatrist, and an emergency medical technician, to name a few. The youth even interviewed their grandparents to understand how their communities had changed from thriving towns with theaters and recreation centers to rows of empty buildings displaying "For Sale" signs.

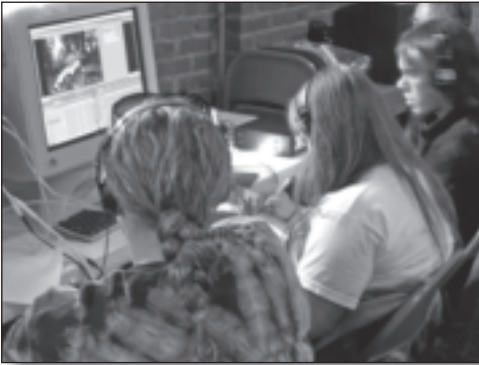
The culmination of this work was a screening of the films at Appalshop's Seed-time mountain music and cultural festival, held every June. These films, titled *Can You*



AMI interns TJ Caudill and Machlyn Blair, with Natasha Watts (bottom), AMI's media production trainer, interview Dee Davis, executive director of the Center for Rural Strategies, about issues affecting rural communities

“Young people help energize ongoing adult movements with new ideas, and adults mentor youth through the challenging process of understanding the systemic problems in their communities.”

Handle the Truth? and *Living with Prescription Drugs*, were the most well-attended screenings of the entire festival – quite an accomplishment considering most of the festival’s films were made by filmmakers who had worked in the industry for decades. To discuss the films, UNITE set up a panel,



Summer Documentary Institute participants Amber Watts, Autumn Campbell, and T.J. Caudill (L-R) edit footage from Whitesburg, Kentucky’s Cowan Creek Music School

which included Mach, an AMI intern named Autumn, and the judge executive of the county. By the end of the discussion, people were talking about everything from creating a youth recreation center to building a drug rehabilitation center.

Both the adults of the UNITE coalition and the youth from AMI wanted to make an impact on teen drug abuse. The AMI interns noticed that the prevention curriculum used at their school didn’t get any attention or respect from their friends. Working with the UNITE coalition, the AMI interns are helping to get

a new curriculum into their school district – one that really engages teenagers and talks about the problem frankly. The new curriculum will include the video *Living with Prescription Drugs*, a discussion guide that UNITE is developing with the local public health department, and a series of discussions led by the AMI interns in elementary, middle school, and high school classrooms. The UNITE coalition is providing access and funds – talking to administrators and teachers about implementing the new curriculum and underwriting its printing and distribution. The AMI youth are providing a different kind of access and understanding, which will ensure that the new curriculum is one that really engages other young people.

Of this collaboration Mach comments, “If it was just adults, I would have worried that they would try to figure out what the kids want to do but they wouldn’t have gotten the kids’ input. Lots of times [adults] think they know what kids want, but they don’t.” Mach pauses, then says, “This is something we have to solve as a community.” **cMr**

Bridging Communities Through Access TV

O’ahu is home to Hawaii’s capital city, Honolulu, and is one of the eight major Hawaiian islands. ‘Olelo Community Television has operated O’ahu’s public, educational and government access channels since 1989.

Eight years ago, ‘Olelo branched into a business model of decentralized services on O’ahu. ‘Olelo now operates seven community media centers (CMCs) in order to ensure some of the most remote communities have access to video production resources and are aware of how community access television empowers them to tell their own stories.

The goal of the CMCs is to build community relationships and understanding across O’ahu by encouraging self-representation of those who are traditionally underrepresented in mainstream media and, very often, even in community media. Through this practice of meeting O’ahu’s communities where they live and bringing video production resources to them, ‘Olelo has been fortunate to air community voices and stories that had previously not been heard.

By partnering with community organizations such as the Queen Liliuokalani Children’s Center, ‘Olelo has been able to work with Native Hawaiian youth to create their Ohana (family) video journals. This project empowers

students to share stories of their Ohana with their classmates and with viewers across the island.

‘Olelo has also partnered with Mayor Wright Housing, a public housing community, to train interested residents in video production. The resulting videos represented the residents’ own views of their neighborhood.

One of the first CMCs ‘Olelo opened was on the Waianae Coast, an area that is home to the highest percentage of Native Hawaiians and also farthest away from ‘Olelo’s main facility in town. Once the Waianae CMC opened, the amount of Native Hawaiian programming on the channels dramatically increased.

‘Olelo knew then that making media accessible was the key to making it valuable to communities and began an aggressive drive to create CMCs in underrepresented communities across the island. Lack of time, transportation, foreign surroundings and lack of information presented in a familiar language or style can all be barriers to participation. Access TV that is part of a community removes these barriers and lets the diversity of the community’s most marginalized voices be heard.

~ Meredith Nichols
director of community media centers,
‘Olelo Community Television

Visual Evidence For Social Change

by *Lyell Davies*

ON JANUARY 19TH, 2005, the video documentary *System Failure: Violence, Abuse, and Neglect in the California Youth Authority* was screened before California's Congress. This prompted the introduction, five days later, of legislation designed to reform the state's youth incarceration system. Behind the making of this videotape, and pushing for its screening at the legislature, was Witness – an international human rights advocacy organization using video to draw attention to cases of injustice.

Founded in 1992 by musician Peter Gabriel, Witness illustrates how video – as a tool for recording visual evidence – can be used in the service of campaigns and movements for change. “What most shocked me,” says Gabriel, “was that many human rights abuses were being successfully denied, buried, ignored and forgotten ... it was clear that in those cases where photographic film or video evidence existed, it was almost impossible for the oppressors to get away with it.” To date, Witness has worked with 200 partners in 50 countries to collect over 2,000 hours of videotaped evidence on issues as varied as trafficking of women and forced prostitution, neglect of landmine survivors in Senegal, and abuse of psychiatric patients in Paraguayan mental hospitals.

Videotaped images can play a variety of roles in advocacy work, argues Witness' Sam Gregory. Gregory says the videos offer “incontrovertible evidence of something that happened” and “engage people's gut, very viscerally.” In addition, video allows for the presentation of embodied spoken testimony by people who have experienced injustice or oppression. Indeed, says Gregory, “I've recently been persuaded that testimony, in fact, is more powerful in persuading people than visual images.”

Successful use of video for social change necessitates more than simply making a video documentary. In the instance of *System Failure*, the video's success rested

on its integration within a well thought-out advocacy effort orchestrated by Witness and campaign partner The Ella Baker Center For Human Rights. The screening of the video at the legislature dovetailed with efforts by Senate Majority Leader Gloria Romera to introduce a bill for the CYA's reform, and, presented in concert with an official report on the CYA, the video tipped the balance of opinion and pushed legislators to take action.

To maximize its effect, *System Failure* was also aesthetically targeted at elected officials. Gregory explains that an earlier video, titled *Books Not Bars*, was made to mobilize young people around the issue of youth incarceration. “It was sort of a music video about youth-led efforts against the prison industrial complex.” In contrast, *System Failure* was made for an audience of legislators, parents of incarcerated youth, and prison officials, and it therefore adopted a slower-paced format and used music more conservatively.

Finding the correct style for an advocacy video can be an engaging proposition for media makers, particularly when working in intercultural or intergenerational settings. For instance, stiff, fact-based videos may fail to inspire some audiences, while playful, dramatic, or emotion-driven videos may be dismissed as manipulative in other settings. In one of Witness' campaigns, involving refugees on the Thai-Burma border, karaoke videos were successfully used in local organizing efforts. However, “I wouldn't show karaoke videos about refugees to a Congressional organization in the U.S.,” says Gregory, “we have to decide what works the best for different audiences.”

In recent years, there has been an explosion in independent documentary filmmaking – including many films addressing political themes. The success of these films is often measured

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Useful Links

- **I-Witness Video**
iwitnessvideo.info
- **Witness**
www.witness.org
- **VIDEO FOR CHANGE: A GUIDE FOR ADVOCACY AND ACTIVISM, 2005.**
Published by the Pluto Press in association with Witness.
- **Witness's Video for Change Training Guide**
www.witness.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=277&Itemid=207&limit=1&limitstart=1

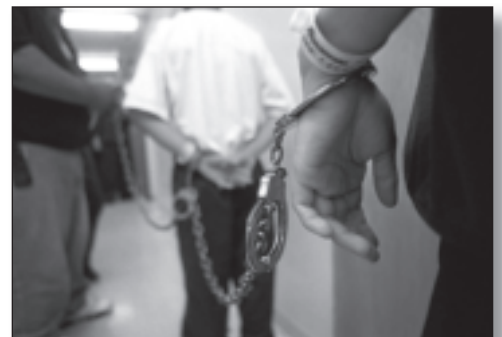


Photo courtesy Ventura County Star

“And what of the Rodney King footage? Simply, if King’s beating had not been videotaped, there would have been no evidence that anything at all had occurred.”

by whether they reach mass audiences. However, some film theorists argue that documentaries encourage epistophilia among audiences – a pleasure in “knowing something about the world,” but this does not stir viewers to take any action on what they have seen. Within the model of video advocacy utilized by Witness, the focus is not on reaching a mass audience; rather the goal is to bring, at precisely the right moment, the right visual evidence to decision-makers or communities – so that action can be taken.

Historically, one of the most widely viewed clips of video footage is George Holliday’s 12-minute clip of LAPD police officers subduing Rodney King on a Los Angeles-area highway. For many, the clip offers incontrovertible evidence that the officers assaulted King. However, during

the officers’ trial, defense lawyers dissected the video footage frame-by-frame, and convinced the jury that the officers had conducted themselves correctly. If videotaped images are open to such wildly disparate interpretation, what is their use as visual evidence?

In New York City, I-Witness Video (a group not affiliated with Witness) uses video to expose perjury and abuse on the part of NYPD officers. I-Witness Video’s Eileen Clancy traces her interest in video to earlier work as a civil rights monitor in Northern Ireland. There, she remembers, “It was a challenge to have a public conversation about the bad things that were happening ... there was a hostile police force and a hostile army. Things would happen but you couldn’t talk about them; they weren’t covered by the media.” Video of-

Video and Community Organizing: A Grassroots Perspective

Video production is an integral feature of the organizing conducted by National Mobilization Against Sweatshops (NMASS) – a grassroots membership organization fighting to put workers in control of their work, health and lives. “Videos can serve different functions – they can be used to organize the community directly, to get mainstream media attention, or to record the histories and experiences of workers themselves,” suggests NMASS staff member Karah Newton. Current NMASS campaigns include videos against employer sanctions and other anti-immigrant legislation, and a video about the rights of restaurant and supermarket workers.

Among NMASS’ varied video use is the “Worker’s Video Project” – a participatory media project where NMASS members received video production training and created a series of biographical portraits of workers. For instance, in the video *Herminia*, lower Manhattan resident Herminia Colón describes the health impact of 9/11 on her family and neighbors. “Working people are invisible in the mass media,” argues the project’s video instructor, “We wanted to show the dignity and struggle of real people – and the way working people in New York City are organizing for justice.”

When linked to the Beyond Ground Zero campaign to secure health care for workers and low-income Manhattan residents, *Heminia* gave a human face to the 9/11 health crisis, and, when shown at community screenings, it encouraged other residents to speak up about the links between 9/11 and their health problems.

“But it’s more than video as an end product,” argues

Yuichi Tamano, “Media making is a learning process for members; it helps us to sharpen our message, our thinking, our organizing. I think the video project has made us better organizers.” In addition to community outreach screenings, NMASS airs videotapes on public access TV and posts video clips on the organization’s blog (videonmass.blogspot.com).

Recognizing the value of video footage as legal evidence, NMASS also videotapes pickets and protests. Recently, for instance, rocks were thrown at immigrant workers picketing NYC’s Food Bazaar supermarket chain for back wages. The event was videotaped, the police called, and NMASS had evidence of the attack.

For more information, visit www.nmass.org



A still from *Justicia Será Servida: Food Bazaar*. To see the complete video, go to blip.tv/file/235358

ferred a way of documenting what was going on, thereby fostering “a conversation about facts that couldn’t be diverted by spin and obfuscation on the part of the authorities, or dismissed by the media outlets.”

Working with the “patience of an anthropologist,” Clancy seeks to thoroughly document political rallies or protests, and to generate a fact-based understanding of who was there, and a basic timeline of what occurred, and how. To facilitate her work, Clancy has studied police procedures and seeks to “get her feet to the right spot, and anticipate what might happen.” But, she cautions, if video evidence is to have value, it must be credible, “You better not try and shade things your way or leave out inconvenient information ... If you make an error that the authorities can point out, they will harp on it. You don’t want to give them that.” And, if footage is to be used in court, “Safeguard your original materials, and keep track of whose hands the materials has been in, as they may be asked to testify.”

During the 2004 Republican National Convention, I-Witness Video trained 200 videographers to tape the police’s treatment of protestors, and the evidence generated showed the arbitrary arrest of thousands of people engaged in constitutionally protected acts of protest. Later, this visual evidence was responsible for the dropping of charges against many arrestees. However, the critical feature of I-Witness Video’s work is not to provide evidence for individual court cases. Instead, it is to document how civil liberties are eroded when the police routinely silence protected forms of speech and dissent. By arresting protestors during the RNC, “the police took away the people’s ability to get their message out,” says Clancy. After the RNC, I-Witness Video’s footage was successfully used to solicit coverage of the issue in *The New York Times* – in turn, pushing local elected officials to seek action from the U.S. Department of Justice.

Videotaped evidence does not provide the complete truth of a situation, but it does offer what Clancy calls “a thin layer of facts.” When linked to other forms of evidence or testimony, these can be used

“What most shocked me was that many human rights abuses were being successfully denied, buried, ignored and forgotten ... it was clear that in those cases where photographic film or video evidence existed, it was almost impossible for the oppressors to get away with it.”

*~ Peter Gabriel,
musician
Witness founder*

to generate a rich, fact-based understanding of an event or occurrence – one that can be used to advocate for change. And what of the Rodney King footage? Simply, if King’s beating had not been videotaped, there would have been no evidence that anything at all had occurred. **CMR**

The Media Mobilizing Project

The Media Mobilizing Project (MMP) is a Philadelphia-based organizing initiative started by community organizers about a year and a half ago. MMP is innovating new ways of making community media and building a constituency for media justice toward the goal of building a broad-based, multiracial movement in the U.S.

MMP’s founding beliefs are:

- There is a war on poor people. Part of this war is waged through a battle of images and ideas by the mainstream media.
- In order to build a movement, we need to break isolation between communities’ struggles to be able to make a more transformative fight. We cannot continue to fight our independent battles in a scattered way and media/communications offer a new way to do this.
- Communications must be conceptualized in the broadest way, including the idea that we need to be in the same room together to share our lessons, strategies, and untold stories.

We are engaging members of organizations, activists, and media makers to expose the struggles of working poor parents, hotel workers, taxi workers, and security guards; and expose the effects of gentrification and unaccountable development on poor neighborhoods. Through an embedded media making strategy, we are working to consolidate a network of voices from below that will fight for our own communications infrastructure to distribute our ideas and stories – whether this form is community TV, community radio, internet, or community forums, dinners and cookouts.

For more information, go to www.mediamobilizing.org

MEDIA MAKING IN THE SERVICE OF COMMUNITY ORGANIZING: A SAMPLING OF ORGANIZATIONS

Appalshop

Appalshop is a multi-disciplinary arts and education center in the heart of Appalachia producing original films, video, theater, music and spoken-word recordings, radio, photography, multimedia, and books. www.appalshop.org

Bay Area Video Coalition (BAVC)

Launched in 1976, BAVC is a nonprofit media arts center supporting independent filmmakers and youth media education activities. BAVC's programs "emphasize creative and socially relevant storytelling, high production quality, innovative distribution, and real-world applications of digital media skills." www.bavc.org

Big Noise Tactical

An inheritor of the spirit of the Third Cinema movement, Big Noise is a collaborative media project comprising activists working within the anti-globalization and anti-corporate movement. "We are not filmmakers ... We are rebels, crystallizing radical community." www.bignoisefilms.com

Dyke TV

Founded in the early 1990s to "document rising lesbian activism and to provide a viable platform for lesbian voices to enter the realm of popular culture," Dyke TV's collaboratively-made videos currently air on 108 public access TV channels around the country. www.dyketv.org

Educational Video Center (EVC)

EVC "teaches documentary video production and media analysis to youth, educators and community organizers." Through programs such as Youth Organizer's TV (Yo-TV), EVC partners youth media makers with community-based social justice organizations. www.evc.org

Flying Focus Video Collective

Flying Focus "is a group of activists using video as a tool for social change." In operation since 1991, the collective has made over 500 videos for airing on public access TV. www.flyingfocus.org

Global Action Project (GAP)

GAP's mission is to provide youth with the knowledge, tools, and relationships they need to create powerful, thought-provoking media on local and international issues, and to use their media as a catalyst for dialogue

and social change. Since 1991, GAP has trained thousands of youth living in underserved communities from NYC to Croatia, Guatemala to the Middle East. www.global-action.org

Indigenous Action Media (IAM)

Founded in 2001, IAM's mission is to help "indigenous youth address environmental and social justice issues through creative forms of media outreach." IAM produces documentaries on social justice issues, and offers video training, basic media strategy consultation, and workshops on community organizing. www.indigenousaction.org

Native Lens

911 Media Arts Center's Native Lens youth program introduces Native youth to media as an art form and vehicle for self-expression. Native Lens is dedicated to developing sustainable youth media programs, in partnership with Pacific Northwest tribes, that give Native youth the skills it takes to tell their own stories through digital media making. www.911media.org/youth/native_lens.html

Paper Tiger TV (PTTV)

In operation for over 25 years, the guerilla video collective PTTV produces incisive analysis of the mainstream media, and explores pressing political issues ranging from the military's recruitment of youth and the war in Iraq, to the experiences of queer homeless youth in NYC. "Fun, funky, hard-hitting, investigative, compelling and truly alternative media for 25 years." www.papertiger.org

Third World Newsreel (TWN)

Founded in 1967, TWN is one of the oldest alternative media arts organizations in the United States. TWN offers training in media production and distributes an extensive catalogue of social justice themed videos. "We are committed to the creation and appreciation of independent and social issue media by and about people of color, and the peoples of developing countries around the world." www.thirdworldnewsreel.org

Working Films

Through independent documentary film and video production, Working Films "vividly illustrates the struggles and triumphs of our lives." Committed to long-term community organizing and activism, the Working Films' motto is "content + intent = change." www.workingfilms.org

ALBA TV: An Alternative Communication Model for the Americas

by Jennifer Wager & Denisse Andrade

AS THE REACH of transnational media corporations continues to expand to nearly every corner of the globe, local media becomes all the more important to sustaining a sense of community for many people. But what if community access centers and community video collectives were able to reach an international audience? What if we were able to initiate a dialogue on a community-to-community level, transcending national borders? These are the questions posed by a fascinating new project arising from Latin America and the Caribbean called ALBA TV, a new way of defining transnational communications.

Formed in February of this year, the fledgling project includes the participation of community TV stations and video collectives from twelve countries – Argentina, Brazil, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, United States (NYC), Mexico, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Uruguay, and Venezuela – with hopes of expanding to encompass all of the Americas. The network plans to begin transmitting via satellite over the course of the summer, initially with three hours of daily programming, and later to more than six hours. The network initially plans to broadcast primarily in Spanish, but hopes to soon expand to Portuguese, French and English.

Why an international community TV network?

Media conglomerates in Latin America are not much different than those found in the U.S. When the elite controls the

airwaves, public opinion is formed on the basis of the interests of these groups. In light of this, it is important to “democratize the radio-electric spectrum” reads all literature pertaining to this endeavor.

ALBA TV organizers have two main objectives: To create a community television network, broadcast via a unique hybrid model of satellite and internet tech-

nologies, that can be downloaded by every community television station, social movement or specific community; and to increase the capacity for community-based media in the Americas. To this end, ALBA TV is creating “formation brigades” to go to communities in Latin America requesting help in

creating community access TV centers and training community video production educators to teach their communities how to make media.

Another objective of ALBA TV is Latin American integration. In lieu of initiatives that bring countries together outside of the economic realm, this is perhaps where ALBA TV will gain many adepts. “The only thing I know of Mexico is by watching their *telenovelas*, where everyone is rich and blond. We’re all neighbors here, but we don’t really know each other,” says Joaquin Zuniga, of the Fundación Luciernaga, a Nicaraguan NGO that produces videos on the issues that most affect the Nicaraguan people, including food security. “ALBA TV is a way that Nicaraguans can really know the Mexican reality, a way that we can all get to know each other.”



Jennifer Wager is a Newark, NJ-based media educator and director of the internationally acclaimed film *Venezuela Rising*. Since 1995, she has created several online experimental education projects, including the Smithsonian Award-winning W.E.B. Du Bois Virtual University. Jennifer can be reached at jwa1970@gmail.com

Denisse Andrade is a media maker and activist based in New York City. She has been involved with multiple grassroots media groups and projects in Latin America and the U.S., mainly Paper Tiger TV and the NYC Grassroots Media Coalition, which she co-founded in 2003.

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Useful Links

- **Alba TV**
www.albatv.org
- **TATUY Televisión Comunitaria**
www.tatuytelevision.blogspot.com
- **Chile – Señal 3 La Victoria: Televisión Comunitaria, Chile**
www.canal3lavictoria.cl
- **Ecuador – Minga Social**
www.mingasocial.org
- **Colombia – Prensa Rural**
prensarural.org/spip

An important function of ALBA TV will be to create an archive of programming from participating countries. Many video collectives and community TV stations have already pledged to contribute decades of material, including Nicaragua, which is contributing material recently produced and hailing from the days of the Sandinistas. Community television tends to be an ephemeral endeavor, with archiving done on an ad hoc basis, so to be able to have an accessible collection of programming past and present from across Latin America is no small feat. Participating organizations have also discussed the idea of creating a website which will house educational materials, print and video from various *escuelas de cine popular* or popular video schools which have emerged throughout the continent. This will be one step in developing an aesthetic that is unique to community television, and breaks free from the confines of commercial broadcast television.

Belgica Buenavides, an organizer from a workers center in New York City, which also runs a video project airing on local community access television, echoes this sentiment. “Many times people in our communities (in our countries of origin) do not know the reality of life in the U.S., including the lives of documented and undocumented working people. They think life is easy here, but the reality is different.”

The case of Ecuador

The state of communications in Ecuador, one of the most active countries participating in the ALBA TV project, is illustrative of both the need and the potential for ALBA TV.

Like other Latin American countries, Ecuador is inundated with media that originates from other countries, including satellite television from the United States. In addition, of the seven national open air channels, two are owned by one family, and others are connected to the financial community and are privately owned. Only five percent of the national

spectrum is given to radio and television, the remaining 95% is dedicated to telecommunications firms and financial entities. In Ecuador’s two largest cities, Quito and Guayaquil, there is no remaining space on the spectrum for open UHF or VHF signals.

To address the “creation of communication as a spectacle, where citizens observe but they cannot participate,” more than 30 community and national organizations met in March of this year to seek solutions to what many communities in Ecuador call a media crisis.

The ALBA TV project is developing the capacity of Ecuadorian communities to participate in media making, and is creating an alternative model of communication based on a dialogue among communities – a novel idea in a country accustomed to being a mere consumer of information.

The meat of the project consists of creating neighborhood TV stations in communities throughout Ecuador, including indigenous communities, which have traditionally been marginalized and subject to racist representation by private media outlets. On the policy level, ALBA TV’s efforts are focused on drafting a proposal for the new Constitutional Assembly, which begins its process with an election of delegates in September and which is set to democratize the communications environment in Ecuador, to ultimately provide more support for community-based broadcasters.

“We’ve had enough of how private media represents our communities. Enough’s enough! It’s time to build something new, with our own aesthetic. It’s time to build a participatory communication system that really serves us.”



Community organizations from across Ecuador came together in March to debate and decide how their country would participate in the project

The future of community media in the Americas

Networks such as ALBA TV have the potential to truly change the way we experience television – both as producers and consumers. Although community television is not new in Latin America, the intentional effort to include those who do not exist in the eyes of the mainstream channels is a huge step in tying media making to the social changes that have been occurring throughout the region, particularly vis-à-vis the neoliberal impositions of the last fifteen years.

Lucia Bruno, communications director for the Interreligious Foundation for Community Organization, said, “As a faith-based organization, our mission is to build bridges of mutual respect to our neighbors. This means challenging profit-driven U.S. foreign policy, which has, for

too long, been destructive to communities throughout the Caribbean and Latin America. The ALBA TV project offers community organizations in the U.S. an opportunity to share our common struggles with grassroots movements in Latin America.”

In the words of one of the founding members of ALBA TV from Ecuador, “We’ve had enough of how private media represents our communities. Enough’s enough! It’s time to build something new, with our own aesthetic. It’s time to build a participatory communication system that really serves us.” **cMr**



ALBA TV's logo represents the project's goal of integrating communities across Latin America

Uruguayan Congress Approves Draft Law On Community Broadcasting

The following is a press release from The World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters (AMARC)/International Freedom of Expression eXchange, June 6th, 2007.

On 5 June 2007, the Uruguayan Congress (Cámara de Representantes) approved by 49 out of a total of 59 votes, a draft law aimed at regulating and formally recognizing a third broadcasting sector: community radio and television, to be run by nonprofit civil society organizations.

The draft law recognizes that radio broadcasting “is a technical support for exercising the human right to freedom of expression and freedom of information, which is an inherent right that predates state intervention.” Under the new law, the radio-electric spectrum will be considered “an asset belonging collectively to humanity, subject to the administration of states, and therefore its equitable use by all of Uruguayan society is the overriding principle that will guide its administration.”

The draft law also expressly stipulates that no prior or arbitrary limits may be placed on community media's exercise of freedom of expression by limiting the power of their transmitters, the range of coverage, or the number of stations in any locality.

The law establishes for the first time in Uruguay that frequencies must be allocated through open competitive processes that are public, transparent, and non-discretionary, and that involve prior public consultation. It also establishes, in accord with the recommendations of the Organisation of American States (OAS), that a part of the spectrum must be reserved for non-commercial and community use.

Another innovative aspect of the draft law is its call for the creation of a Honorary Consultative Council (Consejo Honorario Consultivo), comprised of civil society representatives and representatives of public and private universities, as well as government representatives, to observe and participate in the process of the allocation and renewal of broadcasting frequency concessions.

The original draft of the law, introduced to Parliament in 2005 with the support of a group of legislators, stemmed from an initiative by a coalition of organizations including AMARC, the national journalists' association (Asociación de la Prensa Uruguaya, APU), the public university (Universidad de la República), human rights organizations, and the national workers' central.

The full text of the draft law (in Spanish) is available at:
[legislaciones.amarc.org/
URU_Proyecto_Ley_Radiodifusion_Comunitaria_05062007.pdf](http://legislaciones.amarc.org/URU_Proyecto_Ley_Radiodifusion_Comunitaria_05062007.pdf)

Section III. Expanding Community Media Center Capacity to Advance Media Justice



Brittany Shoot is a writer and media maker living in Boston, MA. She is co-founder of HollaBackBoston.com. She is currently finishing her MA thesis about women's confessional videoblogging, and regularly facilitates workshops about personal media.

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Ivetta Sanchez works for the Community Media and Outreach Department at Manhattan Neighborhood Network. She is an active videoblogger who has spoken on various panels at conferences throughout the United States about videoblogging and the digital divide.

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Her website is themomentends.typepad.com

Videoblogging as Citizen Media: From Public Access to a Participatory Web

by **Brittany Shoot & Ivetta Sanchez**

IN THE LATE 1980S, after Ronald Reagan's reelection, and as general distrust of the mainstream media's echo chamber grew, recognition of and acceptance for independent media began to spread. In the past decade, since the successful Seattle World Trade Organization protests of 1999, citizen journalism has gained prominence and legitimacy in the eyes

of social activists and even a growing acceptance in conventional media outlets. Activists, marginalized community members, and disenfranchised media makers tired of being

misrepresented in mainstream media decided to fight back by creating their own media – by the people, for the people.

The closed nature of mainstream media has given rise to citizen journalism, wherein everyday citizens take part in collecting and analyzing news data; and now, more than ever, with a participatory internet, citizens are also increasingly news disseminators. Many online citizen journalists – bloggers and videobloggers – come out of similar traditions that bred community media centers. When citizens and community members can produce their own media, tell their own stories, and amplify their voices through distribution channels, change begins from the ground up.

Three years ago, in the midst of a burgeoning technology movement and pushed by community access produc-

ers who still weren't satisfied with their broadcast range, videoblogging was born. Internet bandwidth was limited, compressed videos were pixilated, and downloads could take hours. Only by trial and error, toying with video compression settings, and borrowing web space, videoblogging began to emerge. For many, video on the web was a natural

extension of community media, and particularly, public access television.

Ryanne Hodson, one of the first dozen videobloggers to publish content on the internet and seriously engage

with others through the medium, explained in her December 2004 videoblog post, *V-Blog Conversation*, "I feel like it's an amazing medium for people like myself who wouldn't make short videos just on a whim." With a background in public television and video editing, online video and advocating for the disenfranchised was a natural step forward for a woman like Hodson. Luckily, she wasn't alone.

With many videobloggers coming from public access television backgrounds, activism, or the artistic world, the idea of spreading their own media online resonated with their existing passions. Hodson (along with other zealous citizen journalists-turned-videoblogging-evangelists such as Steve Garfield and Andy Carvin) is responsible for laying some of the initial groundwork in Boston, and has had a continued influence over aspiring and

“By empowering everyday citizens and traditionally marginalized communities to employ and raise their voices through new forms of media, we raise social consciousness and forcefully impact society.”

seasoned videobloggers alike. Hodson collaborated with Texas vlogger Michael Verdi in 2006 to write *THE SECRETS OF VIDEOBLOGGING*. The professional duo also maintains resources like *FreeVlog.org*, an online tutorial covering the basics of videoblogging. Additionally, Hodson and partner Jay Dedman, both with backgrounds in local television, helped co-found *NODE101* (node101.org), an educational, free-form collaboration of teachers and media makers, promoting media literacy and providing resources for videoblogging and other personal media. As part of their contribution to a growing network of online video producers worldwide, organizers like Hodson and Dedman remain committed to teaching and facilitating new projects in their virtual community and beyond.

Around the same time *NODE101* and *FreeVlog.org* were established, many access stations across the country started incorporating videoblogging into their training curriculum. From New York to San Francisco, from Cambridge, MA, to Iowa City, IA, public access stations and community media centers started embracing these new tools and realizing that web 2.0 is linking people in new ways and changing the way ideas are exchanged. In many ways, using the existing models in community media centers, new curricula were developed to teach online video distribution.

Practitioners in the public access TV field realized that a more concerted effort needed to be made to ensure fair and diverse representation in these spaces. Internet access needed to be more accessible, and community media centers could work hand-in-hand with the expansion of video online. Aaron Valdez from Iowa City Public Access, described the challenges facing a station in his town. "When I started working here, our equipment was still half analog-based. None of the computers had internet access. It took about a year to phase out the analog and get to the point now where we have three new, very reliable, fully-loaded edit stations with internet access." Even after a serious overhaul, there was still the task of introducing social media applications

Videoblogging Resources

Videoblogging is easier than you think, and many people have the tools at their disposal – you just have to know where to begin. Here are some links and resources to get you started:

- **FreeVlog** (freevlog.org)
Step-by-step tutorial to make a (mostly) free videoblog.
- **NODE101** (node101.org)
Find a videoblog instructor, workshop, or demonstration near you.
- **OurMedia Learning Center** (www.ourmedia.org/learning-center)
An online multimedia production resource.
- **Have Money Will Vlog** (havemoneywillvlog.com)
Promoting online video projects that change the way we see the world.
- **Videoblogging Yahoo Group** (groups.yahoo.com/group/videoblogging)
Join the conversation with videobloggers old and new.

To set up a videoblog, you really only need two web components – a blog and a place to host your video. These sites are great for publishing your own content, creating your own layout and style, and maintaining your copyright protection of choice.

Free blog resources:

- **Blogger** (blogger.com)
- **WordPress** (wordpress.com)

Free video hosting:

- **blip.tv** (blip.tv)
- **Vimeo** (vimeo.com)
- **Internet Archive** (archive.org)

From RSS to copyright and publicity, additional tools you'll need to get started:

- **Creative Commons** (creativecommons.org)
- **FeedBurner** (feedburner.com)
- **Technorati** (technorati.com)

Videoblogs come in all shapes and sizes and promote conversation, inspire action, and entertain. Here are some fun, talented, socially conscious vloggers:

- **Alive In Baghdad** (www.aliveinbaghdad.org)
- **Ebb and Flow** (ebbandflow.tv)
- **PouringDown** (pouringdown.tv)
- **RyanIsHungry** (ryanishungry.com)
- **Sustainable Route** (sustainableroute.com)

to communities that may have previously only used the internet for basic email and search purposes. Overcoming the digital divide – even on a community level – can take extensive resources.

Videobloggers, like local media advocates and grassroots activists, tend to have a developed understanding about issues of ownership and shared production rights. Video sharing sites like *YouTube* that have sprouted up in the past year and a half serve a growing contingent of people who just want their work to be noticed. But videobloggers resist sites like *YouTube* on principle. Instead of allowing a larger media conglomerate or clearinghouse

to hold some of the intellectual property rights over their work (which *YouTube's* user agreement states), videobloggers tend to use video hosting sites like *blip.tv* (blip.tv), the *Internet Archive* (archive.org), or even their own web hosting space. Videobloggers tend to be progressive and community-oriented and often work to expose issues not being covered by mainstream media.

Phoenix's public access station was shut down in early 2006 due to statewide video franchise legislation that was passed in Arizona. However, two web-based resources, *NODE101 Phoenix* (node101phoenix.org) and *Freedom of Speech Television* (accessphoenix.org), prove to be significant placeholders for free speech and community media in this sprawling desert city. Cheryl Colan, who founded the Phoenix Node because of her passion for digital storytelling, says that several social workers have come to her seeking ways to expand awareness around the issues their clients face. Despite one woman's total lack of media experience, Colan explained, "She learned videoblogging from *NODE101* because she wants to put a camera in the hands of Phoenix's homeless population and help them tell their own stories rather than accept their por-

trayal by local media."

In other rural communities, unexpected growth has challenged the way people think about local programming and expanding their audience to a global scale. Lowell, Massachusetts is home to the Lowell Telecommunications Corporation (ltc.org), an organization that supports television and internet video production. In a factory town like Lowell, home to diverse populations of Latin Americans, Cambodians, and many African descendants, LTC provides a new way for historically disenfranchised groups to share their stories, amplify their voices, and communicate more freely. Now there is a growing hotbed of activity where curated online film festivals are sprouting, something unimaginable two years ago. While local access television provided a means to reach local audiences, the potential for global exposure pushes people toward content production as never before.

Stories like those coming out of Phoenix and Lowell are becoming less unique as people learn to operate and maximize the potential of the tools for online production and distribution. By outfitting existing media centers with new media technology and instructors, along with the available online resources like *FreeVlog.org* and traveling contingencies of *NODE101*, a new media revolution is quickly spreading. In no way does videoblogging pose a threat to community media, or intend to replace existing structures; rather, online video distribution has become, for many, a supplement to this important community media resource.

While independent producers face, as always, being co-opted by big money and corporate interest, the tools still lie in the hands of citizen journalists and their supportive viewers – networks of allies, friends, and like-minded creators pushing the boundaries of conversation and convention through digital media. By empowering everyday citizens and traditionally marginalized communities to employ and raise their voices through new forms of media, we raise social consciousness and forcefully impact society. **cMr**



Cheryl Colan, from *NODE101 Phoenix*, shows a student how to videoblog

“In no way does videoblogging pose a threat to community media, or intend to replace existing structures; rather, online video distribution has become, for many, a supplement to this important community media resource.”

The True Potential of File Sharing

by Jay Dedman

WE ARE NOW IN A TIME when people are not just sending files to each other, but actually collaborating on projects over far distances. A producer can now work with five people across the country, or across the world, and edit a project together. *Aliveinbaghdad.org* is a good example of how video is shot weekly in Iraq, but edited and published from Boston. The project is successfully produced each week on a shoestring budget. It's all doable because the team can communicate through email or skype, an internet phone service, for free. Everyone shoots with inexpensive digital cameras and edits on the most stripped down computer. The videos they create rival anything you would see on the news because it's about content.

But isn't transferring large files slow? The speed of file transfer depends on the speed of your internet connection. Since upload speeds are usually significantly slower than download speeds, the bottleneck occurs with the upload (speeds are arbitrarily determined by the cable/phone companies). Let's do the math: 1 gigabyte (GB) is equal to about 4 minutes of DV quality video. At normal broadband speeds, 1GB takes about an hour to transfer. Once you start compressing the video, which is still appropriate for editing, you can move longer videos around even faster.

This is not just FTP where you upload to a server, and then someone else downloads it from that server. We are talking much more efficient and direct: computer-to-computer. You don't need to be an uber-nerd to set up your own networks. There are free services online that make all the geeky technology invisible. There are also plenty of online communities to answer any questions you may have (see sidebar for a list of resources).

As with anything you use on the web, make sure you feel comfortable with the Terms of Service. But since it's all free, just play and experiment.

We are in a video renaissance. No longer do public access TV stations have to stumble into vendor lock-in with expensive, inappropriate technology. The web is providing the tools and resources to help us connect and create a frictionless environment where we can focus on storytelling, archiving, and community building like we are supposed to. So even though we are cable tv stations, we need to make sure we lead the fight to gain more bandwidth for the community.

We must also lead the fight to maintain the openness of the web as it exists now. The founders of public access TV would have jumped at the chance to use yet another great resource to give us all a stronger, more connected voice. **cMr**



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“The web is providing the tools and resources to help us connect and create a frictionless environment where we can focus on storytelling, archiving, and community building like we are supposed to.”

File Sharing Resources

The following sources show how to build your own file sharing networks in five minutes:

- **yousendit**
yousendit.com
Allows for the transfer of large files. It's free to a certain limit, beyond which a subscription fee is required.
- **pando**
pando.com
A powerful, free application that lets you send files to a group of people.
- **Broadcast Machine and Democracy Player**
www.getdemocracy.com/broadcast
www.getdemocracy.com
An open source, community-built solution which is a little more difficult to set up, but works well.
- **spinXpress**
spinxpress.com
Promotes online video projects that change the way we see the world.

The Right to Public Access TV is for All: Making the Case for Youth Media

by Cynthia Carrion & Antoine Haywood



Cynthia Carrion is the director of MNN Youth Channel, the first channel created by youth for youth.

Cynthia joined MNN's Youth Channel as its outreach coordinator in June 2004, and has co-organized various youth events and productions including, "I Have a Voice" an LGBT Youth Media Conference. She has coordinated many youth productions including *Bringing Back Venezuela* and has also been involved in the NAMAC Youth Media Leadership Institute. Cynthia can be reached at cynthia@youthchannel.org

COMMON PRACTICE among many public access centers across the country is to limit participation to individuals who are at least 18 years of age. Most centers state insurance and liability reasons for such limits. Yet, to those access centers that integrate youth programming into their facility, the rewards often outweigh the challenges. In today's environment, public access television is under pressure to scale back services. However, there remain a growing number of access centers opening their doors and embracing the younger members of their communities.

According to the U.S. Bureau of the Census, Population Division, the nation's youth (those under 20 years of age) comprise nearly 30 percent of the total population (www.census.gov/population/www/projections/ppl47.html#tr-age-youth). And yet, of the 80,000 U.S. public schools that serve 47 million students, only 50 percent of students have a computer in their classroom. As stated on the Alliance for Community Media's national website "many PEG access centers now provide computer labs and internet services for individuals and groups that would otherwise not have access to these technologies."

Access facilities are also providing a much-needed resource to the youth in their communities. John Gwinn, Phillips Community TV program director, believes that youth media programs can build community connections. "Through meaningful work, where young people are not just receiving a service, but contributing something, young people begin to discover a sense of purpose. They begin to understand how they can share their interests and views, and

how their messages can influence others. Being involved in issues they care about changes their perspective on the world and their role in it." (www.youthmediareporter.org/2006/08/a_growth_opportunity.html)

Throughout the nation, public access stations are collaborating with schools, youth-based organizations, and neighborhood youth to bring the resources of media making to new generations. Nearly 20 years ago, Susan Fleischmann, executive director of Cambridge Community Television, began creating youth programs at CCTV, a practice she states, "has ensured that our constituency keeps growing." Youth programs have become a staple of the services that CCTV offers its community.

During the past decade, an increasing number of innovative collaborations in both urban and rural communities has provided youth with safer media environments, which helps foster positive learning experiences and self-expression. Partnerships with youth-oriented organizations help public access stations increase on-air programming, expand the scope of their community outreach, and generate more financial support. From foundations and cultural councils, to federal, state and local agencies, a wide variety of organizations is supporting the youth work at access stations across the United States.

According to Ingrid Dahl, editor of the Youth Media Reporter, "Youth media has grown and is being recognized by funders because it neighbors so many fields, and is being combined with service learning, enabling youth to share their ideas and experiences."

Many access facilities began organizing their youth programs through summer youth employment initiatives. These efforts allowed access centers to be designated worksites for youth. As Susan Fleischmann recalls, "The Mayor's Summer



Students from Beginning with Children Charter School filming a scene for their stop-animation projects

Youth Employment program was able to pay young people to create and learn new skills other than picking-up garbage, a service the parks department used them for.” Today, CCTV boasts of Shaun Clark, a young man who walked through their doors as a summer youth nearly 15 years ago and is now a CCTV program director.

Within the past few years, there has been a surge of pioneer programs that model ways in which public access stations create avenues of opportunity for youth producers. A closer look at Manhattan Neighborhood Network’s Youth Channel and People TV’s FUEL Media in Atlanta provide more insight into the successful development of youth media programs at access centers.

MNN Youth Channel

Founded on a commitment to youth education, empowerment, communication, and community building, the Manhattan Neighborhood Network Youth Channel (YC) is a leader in this growing field of youth media education, production and distribution. Created in 2000, YC’s mission is to provide youth with access to a high quality media-learning and media-making environment. Its programs focus on teaching media production skills – including documentary video making, studio television production, and public service announcement (PSA) production – and media literacy training, with an emphasis on at-risk youth. (All of YC’s curricula can be downloaded off its website, www.youthchannel.org).

YC has developed an innovative peer-training program where youth program participants work with skilled video trainers their own age and from their background. This approach has been very successful in having youth be decision-makers on their projects – and it has created an environment where youth come back again and again to work together for shared goals.

A central feature of YC’s work is building community partnerships. YC has developed working relationships with many organizations ranging from youth recreation groups to community-based organi-

zations, elementary and high schools, as well as colleges. By bringing media making and media literacy activities together, these organizations are engaging in making actual media that serves their needs, and allows them to outreach to new constituents. In addition, YC, in partnership with Atlanta’s People TV, Saint Paul Neighborhood Network, Portland Community Media and Grand Rapids Community Media Center, has launched the Youth Video Exchange Network (YVXN, nymapexchange.net), allowing youth-made media from across the country to be accessible for airing on public access channels nationwide (a project supported with funding from the Ford Foundation).

Each year, YC produces scores of hours of high quality youth-centered TV programs and videos on themes as diverse as immigrant’s rights, local elections, the war in Iraq, health services for youth, and dance, poetry and rap music. In addition to airings on public access TV, these videos are circulated to schools and libraries for educational use, and have been viewed by thousands of people at community screenings. YC videos have also won awards in film and video festivals around the country. In 2006, YC launched *Beyond the Hijab: Struggling Against Stereotypes*, a documentary about 18 year-old Habibah Ahmad, an Afro-American Muslim woman, and her daily struggle against discriminatory labels. Spearheaded by Ms. Ahmad, a YC youth producer,



Antoine Haywood is the manager of community development at People TV in Atlanta, GA. He has a background in youth media program and curriculum development, grant and proposal writing, and video production. Antoine is also a member of the Alliance national board of directors and co-chair of the fundraising committee.

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“Through meaningful work, where young people are not just receiving a service, but contributing something, young people begin to discover a sense of purpose. They begin to understand how they can share their interests and views, and how their messages can influence others. Being involved in issues they care about changes their perspective on the world and their role in it.”



Students from MS328 Middle School for Scientific Inquiry, on a tour of MNN, learn about the control room

Youth Media Reporter

Youth Media Reporter, a professional journal that serves as a resource to the youth media field, is an initiative of Open Society Institute set to expand and sustain the field. Now managed by The Academy for Educational Development, YMR publishes four articles per month by youth media practitioners, academics, and young professionals that share lessons learned, reflections, and best practices across the field from multiple perspectives. YMR hosts a number of important documents on its website including OSI's *Investing in Youth Media: A Guide for Grantmakers*; *Youth Media's Impact on Audience and Channels of Distribution*; and a *Youth Media Evaluation Toolkit*.

youthmediareporter.org

People TV's FUEL Media (Forging Unity, Equality, and Leadership through Media)

FUEL Media is the youth initiative of People TV in Atlanta, GA. The mission of this program is to empower young people to transform their community, the world, and themselves through media. FUEL Media provides various opportunities for individuals between the ages of 12 – 25 to gain access to video technology that enables them to produce original content that is cablecast on People TV and shared throughout national youth media networks.

Since 2002, People TV has worked hard to accommodate the rapidly increasing demand of Atlanta teens who desire to get involved in its youth media training workshops, productions, and

the video project explored the relationships between race, religion, identity and religious intolerance in post 9/11 America. The project's success is attributed to the screening discussions that Ms. Ahmad leads at schools and youth gatherings, because "it is an opportunity for young people and adults to ask questions about Islam, and to hear from my experiences with discrimination," says Ms. Ahmad.

other career development opportunities. The People TV staff and board of directors have wholeheartedly supported the program by allocating office/work space, designating channel time to telecast youth-produced projects, providing special Saturday and after school workshops, and acquiring grants for start-up project expenses. However, the need for support continues to grow.

The most successful program that FUEL Media has to date is its summer apprenticeships. Just over a year ago, People TV formed an ongoing partnership with the City of Atlanta's Office of Cultural Affairs to offer paid apprenticeship positions for 14-18 year-old youth who have a high level interest in gaining experience in the media arts field. A large part of this program's success is due to its work schedule and attendance policy, which requires the apprentices to participate four hours per day for eight weeks throughout the summer. Compensation also helps ensure consistent levels of participation and personal engagement. One factor that sets this summer apprenticeship program apart from the other FUEL Media programs is the amount of time its participants have to produce a quality of video content that surpasses the quality of projects created in past programs.

Why youth media?

The road to a successful youth media program at public access stations can be

From financially devastating shifts in local franchise agreements, to the emergence and rapid progression of new communication technology, many access centers such as my own [Atlanta People TV] are frantically seeking new tools, practices and business strategies in order to continue providing effective services in our respective communities. In the midst of this paradigmatic change, I believe that the health of the field's future will be heavily predicated on our young people's ability to understand and articulate the importance of access media, and their embrace of the Alliance's legacy.

The presence of youth media programs at access centers around the country has grown at an astounding rate over the past decade. With the guidance of MNN's Youth Channel and its creation of the National Youth Media Access Project in 2002, People TV was inspired to create its own Youth Channel program in 2002. The spirit and concept from which our youth program was conceived exists today.

~ Antoine Haywood

long and fraught with many hurdles. It is no surprise that major obstacles faced by many access stations in providing services to youth are space, funding and support for additional staff and equipment, and tension among youth and adult producers. While there is no panacea for an organization's growing pains of expanded services, Fleischmann urges that access centers "work with your youth members to transform your environment, because they need to be valued with the same respect as all of our special needs constituencies." It is best that youth producers have their own space to create, be supported by a caring and nurturing environment, and have their work celebrated. **cMr**

In April 2006, I became the director of MNN Youth Channel (YC), after serving as its outreach coordinator for two years. Being 25, I was still considered a youth, according to the YC mission statement, and saw myself as a bridge between voicing the concerns of our youth constituency and supporting MNN to be a stronger institution in the community. During the past year, MNN and YC have made strides that strengthen our internal growth as well as commitment to community media. These include an additional satellite facility, which will feature a youth media center, as well as initiatives to create *Youth Channel – All City*, New York City's (and the nation's) only non-commercial channel by youth, for youth.

However, striking a balance between youth and adult members can be challenging in the face of limited resources. It took much persistence, negotiation and, most importantly, listening. Listening to the concerns of community members – from parents, educators, staff and young people – allowed us to ask and answer important questions like, "What can Youth Channel offer you?"

Empowerment, as we have learned, cannot be a stagnant goal, but rather a two-way street in youth development. Once you have made a commitment to have youth voices heard, you need to actively work with them to find solutions for the concerns they raise.

~ Cynthia Carrion

Community Media 2.0 in Action: Building Online Video Distribution Networks

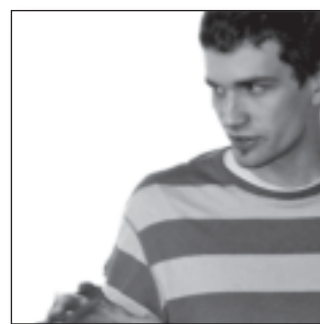
by *Andrew Lynn, Emily Frazier, and Scott Campitelli*

WHETHER YOU ARE a media educator, content producer, service provider, or all of the above, you know by now that emerging technologies and digital tools are changing the backbone of community media. We practitioners are treading water in a sea of buzzwords, and it would seem that the field at-large is undergoing somewhat of an identity crisis.

"Be the Media" was once an anti-corporate mantra, initially coined by the global indymedia network. It has now been adopted by "web 2.0" marketers to sell a do-it-yourself video movement, and is the daily bread for webcam diarists and viral video merchants. On the surface, the evolution of the personal blog (and "videoblog") represents a step toward a truly democratic media, but much of the technologies individualize the content in a way that seems counter to the values held high by the public, educational, and government (PEG) access world.

Community media has been a participatory movement since its inception. The now heroic Portapak pioneers paved the way for public access TV as an inclusionary medium that forced corporations to yield time and money to free speech. So, while videoblogging communities, connected through common digital means rather than any shared physical location, have built the foundation for new forms of video delivery, it is ironic that the rise of "user-generated content" seems to represent a set of paradoxical challenges for PEG providers instead of a new and improved toolbox. While forward-thinking access centers are incorporating videoblogging into their training and programming, it is still unclear how internet distribution is to interface with traditional cablecast.

According to Felicia Sullivan, executive director of the Organizers' Collaborative, a nonprofit technology advocacy group,



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Emily Frazier is a technology integrator for PEG access centers in Vermont and beyond. She assesses and integrates cutting-edge video and web technologies. She also works for the Vermont Access Network as its web developer, and is the technical advisor for the Vermont Media Exchange (VMX).

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More Information

- For more information about YVXN, visit www.nymapexchange.net, or contact Andrew Lynn at andrew@youthchannel.org
- For more information about VMX, visit www.vermontaccess.net/statewide, or contact Scott Campitelli at scottc@retn.org or Emily Frazier at emily.e.frazier@gmail.com

"Integration of new technologies and their processes is a problem within a traditional cable access environment. Organizations lack relevant models, technical skill, vision, as well as adequate human and financial resources. There is also a generation gap in terms of these technologies which is hard to reconcile at times. For PEG access centers, internet-based distribution seems particularly threatening since it supplants cable TV distribution. You have to understand, cable TV distribution is the source of their existing funding rationale and is strongly embedded in their organizational structures. I'm not surprised that internet media distribution has been ignored and in some cases resisted."

In the past year, however, two projects that are attempting to address these challenges have been realized and continue to grow: The Youth Video Exchange Network and the Vermont Media Exchange.

Sharing youth media

The Youth Video Exchange Network (YVXN) was born out of the National Youth Media Access Project (NYMAP). NYMAP was begun in 2002 by the Youth Channel at Manhattan Neighborhood Network, in collaboration with various other access centers from across the country committed to expanding services to young people. Initially, this included a network of sites, such as Lowell Telecommunications Corporation (MA), People TV (GA), St. Paul Neighborhood Network (MN), Grand Rapids Community Media Center (MI), and more. With its founding, NYMAP sought to nurture the right of free speech, to strengthen the much-needed presence of alternative and youth voices, and to connect young media makers from diverse backgrounds. What evolved was a tape "bicycling" network, whereby the different stations would share

youth programming by sending a box of tapes from partner to partner through the mail. As one might imagine, the volume of material became overwhelming, and there was no shared archive or catalog of what programs were being shared. Indeed, NYMAP had become a network of passionate individuals and cooperative

"Community media has been a participatory movement since its inception; the now heroic Portapak pioneers paved the way for public access tv as an inclusionary medium that forced corporations to yield time and money to free speech."

organizations with great potential for collaboration, but it lacked the infrastructure to support its mission, let alone the ability to expand.

The building of the Youth Video Exchange Network began as an examination and analysis of the needs of the existing NYMAP network. We found

that, in addition to sharing programming content, there is a real interest in archiving that content, sharing resources like curricula and administrative materials, and facilitating collaborative productions. So, in the fall of 2006, with some grant support from the Ford Foundation, Manhattan Neighborhood Network's Youth Channel took a leadership role in developing the participatory web portal that would become YVXN (www.nymapexchange.net).

Creating a statewide network

The idea of the Vermont Media Exchange (VMX) first appeared when a coalition of Vermont Access Network (VAN) organizations advocated for a "statewide interconnect" during the period of major Adelphia cable franchise renewals in Vermont in 1999 and 2000.

Beginning in 2001, VAN established the first of several committees to research technical possibilities and community needs for a statewide network of PEG access stations.

Six years later, the dawn of the Vermont statewide network approaches, and phase one presents scenarios only vaguely imagined in the late '90s – from Com-

cast acquiring 85% of Vermont's cable service to the advent of the MP4 file format. One of the greatest needs identified by Vermont access centers is to solve the problems inherent in bicycling analog programs between stations. The costs, staff demands, and timeliness of sharing programs have always limited the ability of Vermont access organizations and community producers to make programs available to other community channels. For such a small state, Vermont can be extremely divided geographically, more so in the winter, and the ability to share community dialogue and local events is universally desired. The first phase of the Vermont Media Exchange provides the ability to share programs through a peer-to-peer network (described below) of access centers throughout the state.

Working together into the future

These two projects, while having separate beginnings, have joined forces to develop a simple and automated interface for sharing programs digitally between centers around the country.

Technically speaking, both projects are using Drupal-based web portals to manage the user interaction and uploaded content. Drupal is an open source website architecture (a content management system) increasingly in use at many media centers. This Drupal-based front-end facilitates the sharing of high-quality video between access centers which could be hundreds or thousands of miles apart. The concept is modeled after the now-defunct Digital Bicycle which was envisioned as a virtual PEG access hub for program sharing, and designed to expand a center's programming without costing already over-extended staff more time and resources.

Both projects are also using Pando (a free email and bitTorrent-based sharing application) to exchange the actual media files via email and RSS feeds (see File Sharing 101 sidebar for more technical information about these resources).

The websites of both VMX and YVXN are administered by a technical coordinator, but all of the content is generated by partners at individual sites.

Each of the two projects is progressing

independently, as well:

In the case of YVXN, a core group of five NYMAP partners – Manhattan Neighborhood Network, St. Paul Neighborhood Network, Portland Community Media, Grand Rapids Community Media Center, and Atlanta's People TV – has been established and is consulted regularly as we develop a website that is the main interface for interaction, discussion, sharing, and attracting new partners.

The public launch of YVXN is slated for the Alliance national conference in July. It has been a year of successful testing and troubleshooting among our five core NYMAP partners. This test phase has seen the transfer of over 15 hours of high-resolution youth-produced video content over the internet. Much of this programming has been played back on local channels during blocks of programming dedicated to youth-produced work. By actually syndicating youth-produced work from other parts of the country locally, in addition to creating a virtual space for cataloging work that has been produced, and providing a space for new collaborative productions, YVXN has extended the original mission of the NYMAP network. Over the next year, we will focus on (1) establishing a National Youth Committee, consisting of young people who will be paid a stipend to participate in and promote the YVXN website, and (2) establishing a YVXN steering group made up of member organizations and representatives that will help to forge the future direction of the project.

Vermont Media Exchange also continues its work. Later phases of the statewide network in Vermont will tackle other identified needs. Active arts, education, com-



Scott Campitelli has been the executive director at Regional Educational Technology Network (RETN) since 1996. RETN provides educational access to approximately 36,000 cable households in the greater Burlington area of Vermont. Scott is a member of the Vermont Media Exchange governing committee, elected to launch and oversee the nascent statewide network in the next several months, and to expand digital file sharing to every PEG access operation in the state. Scott can be reached at scottc@retn.org

“While forward-thinking access stations are incorporating videoblogging into their training offerings and programming, it is still unclear how internet distribution is to interface with traditional cablecast.”



YVXN and VMX are building the human and technical infrastructure for non-commercial video distribution

munity and government groups are eager to utilize an operational network to share their messages and reach out to new people around Vermont. With just over 600,000 citizens, 25 access organizations, and more than 30 channels covering the state, the technology of community media holds the potential to truly connect disparate groups from distant corners of the state. Once the foundation network is built, long-term goals of VMX include expanding the digital file sharing network to all cable systems and access

centers in the state, sharing live events for statewide cablecast from remote locations, and enabling every access center to easily

generate a live signal to other centers for use on-air or otherwise. These live signals are generated using streaming protocols and strive to use freeware and shareware applications. The first successful live streaming event was performed at the end of May with Middlebury Community Television generating a feed of Bill Clinton's commencement address to four other access centers around the state. This was done using Quicktime Broadcaster with less than a 1 mbps upstream internet connection and a third-party company to re-broadcast the stream over greater bandwidth.

What you can do

There are still a lot of unanswered questions around how internet distribution will integrate with PEG stations, but what has become very clear is that collaboration and education are essential in meeting the challenges ahead. YVXN and

File Sharing 101

How it works

Currently, we utilize Ffmpeg encoding and/or transcoding in the form of a desktop droplet to get a reliable high-quality MPEG-4 file. Then, Pando copies the file to a central server and sends a pointer file to all the group members. As more members download the file, a peer-to-peer network is formed. The Drupal-based web-portals take care of most everything else. The websites also provide RSS-feeds that integrate fully into the downloading side of Pando, allowing users to subscribe to auto-downloads, receive an email notification when a download is complete, and easily return it to an on-air format. The many customized scripting and transcoding processes provide efficient automation and reduce staff labor. By using designated and cloned machines (though not required for the application to function) in each location, technical support becomes more reasonable on a shoestring budget.

Some tech terms

Drupal is an open source, modular, content management system that is based on php programming language. Drupal is free to download and has a great deal of online community support. Learn more at www.drupal.org

A **codec** (which stands for compression-decompression) is a software module that contains algorithms used by encoding or playback software to encode or decode video and/or audio information. The future of video codecs lies with those built to the new H.264 or AVC standard that forms part of the MPEG-4 specification (see "Standards," below). A good resource for comparing codecs is www.doom9.org.

Video compression standards, such as the MPEG-1, MPEG-2 and MPEG-4 standards set by the Motion Picture Experts Group, are a set of rules that video codecs and formats must be designed to adhere to. This standardization, as in any other area of

engineering, allows manufacturers and software designers to anticipate the kind of video, audio and other information that their software or hardware will have to process.

Peer-to-peer (p2p) networks allow the sharing of bandwidth and data-transfer load across a community. Users downloading your video from a peer-to-peer network may be downloading from many other individuals' computers instead of from a central server. This has several advantages, including faster download times, as you can share the bandwidth of many internet connections at once.

Pando is a free email and bitTorrent-based sharing application developed by *Pando.com*. In the cases of YVXN and VMX, it has enabled us to transfer large video files by email list or Drupal group.

Some of this information was adapted under a Creative Commons license from the Guide to Digital Video Distribution available at www.engagemedia.org.

VMX are simply two groups who grew frustrated without an online infrastructure for the unique landscape of PEG programming, but these projects are far from complete. The real goal is to extend these applications to other areas of the country for other access centers to tap into, and to someday create a digital PEG distribution network on a national scale. You can help by pressuring your playback company to integrate their software with these solutions, by learning more about content management systems and Drupal, and by putting more open source media tools to use in your center. Most importantly, don't

do it alone. Get in communication with us and your community and work outside the box. Help us build a non-commercial digital distribution infrastructure. **cMr**

“Most importantly, don't do it alone. Get in communication with us and your community and work outside the box. Help us build a non-commercial digital distribution infrastructure.”

Public Access TV Center + Community Radio Station = A New Vision for Community Media

by **Libby Reinish**

IN OCTOBER 2007, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) will open a rare licensing window for new Non-commercial Educational (NCE) full power radio stations. It's the last chance in a generation – for most cities and towns, the last chance ever – to build a full power community radio station. Public access TV stations are poised to make the most of this opportunity, which can further the mission to provide access to community media as well as help to create sustainable, effective community media centers

Though public access TV represented one of the greatest victories for community media, the ground is shifting beneath our PEG channels as technology improves and the political context changes. With the ascendance of a highly deregulatory philosophy in government, many franchise agreements that had rock solid local support may be on the brink of being broken by changes to the laws at the state or federal level. As technology converges, many services that were once offered through one medium can be competed with through another method

– often circumventing any public interest requirements in place on the older medium. In response to these circumstances, some public access stations have moved to broaden the scope of what they do to ensure the survival of the community media ethic in a changing world.

Several pioneering public access TV stations have cohabited with community radio stations, resulting in powerful community media centers that provide access to multiple technologies which produce programming that is vital to creating awareness and change within their communities.

The Grand Rapids Community Media Center in Michigan houses a public access TV station, a full power radio station, a live theater company, and offers media literacy classes. Grand Rapids wisely started diversifying their projects years ago, in part because they understood the politically fragile nature of the franchise that formed the basis of their channel and funding. Their worst fears came to pass this year when they had much of their funding cut as the result of state video

Libby Reinish is full power coordinator at the Prometheus Radio Project, where her dedicated team of organizers works to help nonprofits apply for Non-commercial Educational licenses. She is a founding member of WWOJ-LP, a low power FM station in Northampton, MA, and became involved with community radio when she was a high school student at KGNU in Boulder, CO. Libby has produced pieces for *Making Contact*, *Free Speech Radio News*, and *Sprouts: Radio from the Grassroots*.

Libby can be reached at libby@prometheusradio.org



Antenna being raised at KPCN in Woodburn, OR

franchising legislation affecting many cable access channels. They are facing a four and a half month funding gap that adds up to 20% of the TV station's annual operating budget. Because the radio station brings in additional funds from underwriting and listener support, the center remains viable in the face

of these severe funding cuts. "It's unfortunate that we will need to cut back GRTV services, but that is the reality we're fac-

ing," said GRCMC executive director Laurie Cirivello. "However, thanks to the strength of our WYCE, Wealthy Theatre and GrandNet operations, we will survive this. Grand Rapids is fortunate, because the Community Media Center's services and revenue are much more diversified than most media centers' around the country.

In California, Davis Community Television set up low power station KDRT in 2004. Sakura Saunders, one of the founding members of KDRT, explains, "Within four months of operation, KDRT had over 40 volunteers and 32 local programmers." She sees radio stations as a complement to TV, because "radio is an easy-to-learn and less intimidating communications medium than video." The greater accessibility makes radio production a perfect stepping stone into video production, and media centers that have pursued radio see it as a great way to recruit volunteers.

In just a few months, the FCC will open the NCE licensing window (see sidebar, opposite page). It was originally thought that this window would be largely a rural opportunity, but frequencies are be-

"The most important thing about your community media project is not the kind of license you have, the sort of franchise you have negotiated, or the kind of technology that you use. It is that your center is an institution of a more participatory media, where volunteers can come together and cooperate to add diversity to the media landscape."

Case Study: Channel Zero

Grand Rapids Community Media Center's Channel Zero project uses the radio and the internet to broadcast audio stories. Partnering with our local Urban League, Channel Zero was born. It is a youth-based radio journalism project made by and for urban youth, ages 14-21. It teaches participants to create, produce, and upload internet radio programs. In addition to producing audio stories, participants learn video production and their stories are featured on our radio station, WYCE, and broadcast as part of our Youth Channel programming block on our LiveWire station.

The project seeks to address the absence of web-based activities for this area's underserved urban populations. We give urban youth the opportunity to learn radio production skills, while giving a much needed voice to individuals and communities oftentimes ignored by mainstream media. Channel Zero participants are also trained in a variety of media-related activities, including

media literacy, story development, interviewing/production techniques and, of course, radio production.

For the past two years, we've been recruiting youth and producing audio stories for the CMC. We started out meeting with small groups at the CMC, teaching them the art of telling a good story, helping them brainstorm story ideas, recording and then editing their stories. They were able to take home equipment to record their stories and received a lot of feedback from staff and each other. This year, we moved into Union High School and worked with a broadcast journalism class as well as with students who come to the media center. We've had stories about school spirit, living with lesbian parents, the difficulty of being an immigrant, and young women's obsession with body image. When their stories are complete they are posted on the Channel Zero website: grcmc.org/education/channelzero.

~ Gretchen Vinnedge
Grand Rapids Community Media Center

ginning to appear in some major cities. Community media centers are perfectly positioned to apply for these licenses, and the result could be a community media center that not only provides valuable education and information, but that reflects the general trend in media technology toward convergence. "The most important thing about your community media project is not the kind of license you have, the sort of franchise you have negotiated, or the kind of technology that you use. It is that your center is an institution of a more participatory media, where volunteers can come together and cooperate to add diversity to the media

landscape," said Pete Tridish, director of electromagnetism for the Prometheus Radio Project. **CMR**



A parade welcomes a new community radio station in Northampton, MA

Full Power Radio License Opportunities

The FCC is giving out free radio licenses that commercial entities would have to pay millions of dollars for, and public access stations are ideal candidates.

Does starting a community radio station sound too good to be true? There is a catch. Your group would have to pay for engineering and legal consultants, and the costs of equipment, all of which could run \$20,000 to \$200,000. Most places only have one or two open channels, so the competition will be stiff. But this is the last chance in a generation to apply, and the Prometheus Radio Project can help you get your application in shape!

Prometheus has helped to build radio stations for civil rights groups, unions, schools, tribes, environmentalists and neighborhood organizations of all sorts. Prometheus is working with the Radio for People Coalition to make sure the broadest diversity of civil society groups is aware of this great opportunity.

This is the first licensing window of its kind in 15 years, and this is the last opportunity for most cities and towns to get full power non-commercial radio stations. So if you want a radio station for your community, this is your big chance!

To learn more, contact Prometheus Radio Project at 215.727.9620 x509, or visit www.getradio.org or radioforpeople.org to see if there might be a frequency in your zip code. Don't miss this opportunity to claim your community's slice of the FM dial.

Radio Can Be An Effective Organizing Tool

Try to imagine Woodburn, Oregon: Crops left and right on Highway 99E, driving north. Cruising in a town where you'll start seeing signs like: Restaurante Mexicano, Pozole, Champurrado, Tamales, Casa Imports, in a town where until now there have been two commercial AM radio stations which have dominated Spanish-language broadcasting in the Woodburn area. "La Campeona," one of them, allowed Ramon Ramirez, president of PCUN, to have some hours on-air, three times a week.

His motive was to motivate, educate and better explain their rights. And as Ramon is doing this, in the same month of April, every organizer and activist from Portland all the way to Eugene was preparing for "La Huelga," the boycott on May 1. People around our area reacted to the words of Ramon Ramirez over the airwaves. And they participated in the rally that PCUN organized in front of the capital of Oregon.

This event confirmed to us how effective the power of communication can be when radio is used to organize and to educate. But after the strike, commercial radio cut Ramon's program and went back to their normal commercial programming. The boycott and the reaction of the people made them afraid of what can happen.

So we built our own radio station!

I can tell you right now that to make this happen took years of waiting. It went from months of preparations to collect everything we needed to assemble a radio station, all the way to the awesome opportunity to push the mast up where the antenna is mounted. And yelling, "¡Si se puede! ¡Si se puede! ¡Si se puede!" on the first seconds of a community radio station that got assembled in a weekend with the help of 300 radio activists from all over.

At our radio station, people are reacting by interacting with the radio station, calling in, doing shout-outs, coming to the station, helping out on various projects and lots of volunteering. Also indigenous people from Oaxaca that now live in our area come to our radio station and feel free to speak their native languages: Zapoteco alto o bajo, Triqui, Nahuatl.

You know, being there and listening to them express themselves in their own language, their culture and ways of life. It is such gratifying feeling that I hope that some day all of you get a chance to feel it, too.

Erubiel Valladares Carranza
Pineros y Campesinos Unidos del Noroeste/Northwest Treeplanters and Farmworkers United (PCUN). This is an excerpt from his speech at the National Conference for Media Reform, Memphis, January 2007

The Last Word

IN THE OPENING ARTICLE of this issue, Malkia Cyril eloquently stated,

“Media justice is a framework for media change that seeks to expose the structural racism and class oppression in our media system and create media policy, content, and ownership that is fair and accountable to all people.”

Community media centers (CMCs) are integral in this effort, but cannot just provide access on a traditional “first-come, first-serve” basis. We must proactively expand our reach if we are to be an effective part of the larger media justice movement. As corporate media concentration accelerates, and marginalized communities find themselves shut out or ignored, CMCs can shift the paradigm by helping these communities make their own media. Our everyday practice must be to provide genuine media access and build meaningful relationships with these historically marginalized communities so they ultimately speak for themselves. In this way, we will make major strides in advancing media justice.

CMCs play a key part in the struggle for media justice and democracy, but our centers – along with other community media resources – are only a part of the effort. There are a growing number of organizations that are incorporating media into their organizing, outreach and advocacy work. Community groups like the National Mobilization Against Sweatshops are using access television and other media tools as tactics in their overall strategy of bringing working people together to challenge the systemic roots of oppression and exploitation. In Hawaii, Ōlelo Community Television is enabling public housing residents to tell their own stories. Other media organizations, such as the Appalachian Media Institute, Witness, and the Media Mobilizing Project, are also integrating media strategies into larger movement-building efforts for social and economic justice.

Forward-thinking CMCs are also beginning to use new distribution tools beyond access television – like videoblogging, online file sharing, and radio. Projects like the Youth Video Exchange Network are creating a digital system for sharing high-resolution video over the internet. CMCs are expanding into full and low power radio, resulting in increases in their audience, producers and volunteers. ALBA TV is spearheading the sharing of programming amongst community TV stations and video collectives across the Americas and their potential to reach a global audience through new distribution platforms is massive. With these new digital tools, community media is much more participatory, democratic, inclusive, and able to reach beyond community borders.

CMCs are no longer just cable-access TV organizations; they have become multimedia hubs. Our centers must be open to using new digital platforms and tools in the service of media justice, making these tools accessible to everyone, especially members of hard-hit communities. It’s also critical to protect and expand the physical spaces where people come together, face-to-face. In our centers people learn from each other, acquire skills, engage in collective decision-making, and envision how media can be used to advance our common dreams, goals and issues.

Finally, I would like to touch on the powerful role of youth in community media. Young people – whose issues, views and opinions are often ignored – bring valuable life experience to the struggles for social change. Manhattan Neighborhood Network, People TV, Cambridge Community TV and Grand Rapids Community Media Center, and others, have launched programs to engage youth in media production to address issues ranging from discrimination and immigrant rights, to the war in Iraq. This new generation of dynamic leaders will help ensure the sustainability of community media. All of us in the expanding media justice movement can tap into and learn from the eagerness of young people to explore new ways of distributing media, the ease with which they master new technology, and their openness to taking risks – creatively and politically. Youth, along with other disenfranchised groups, are the bedrock of our community media movement. In addition to reaching out to social justice organizations and employing new technologies, CMCs can help build and sustain the media justice movement by reaching out to and cultivating youth as new media visionaries.

I conclude with four things CMCs can do to promote social change and media justice:

1. Reach out to marginalized communities and social justice organizations as partners and programmers.
2. Employ digital technologies for distribution beyond the channels and make them accessible to disenfranchised communities.
3. Draw upon the energy, creativity, and open-mindedness of young people.
4. Cultivate these groups as stakeholders and as defenders of community media, because once they are empowered and understand the importance of access to media tools, they will fight to defend and expand these resources.

I am confident we will work together to build a just media system that we all know we rightfully deserve.

~ Betty Yu

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